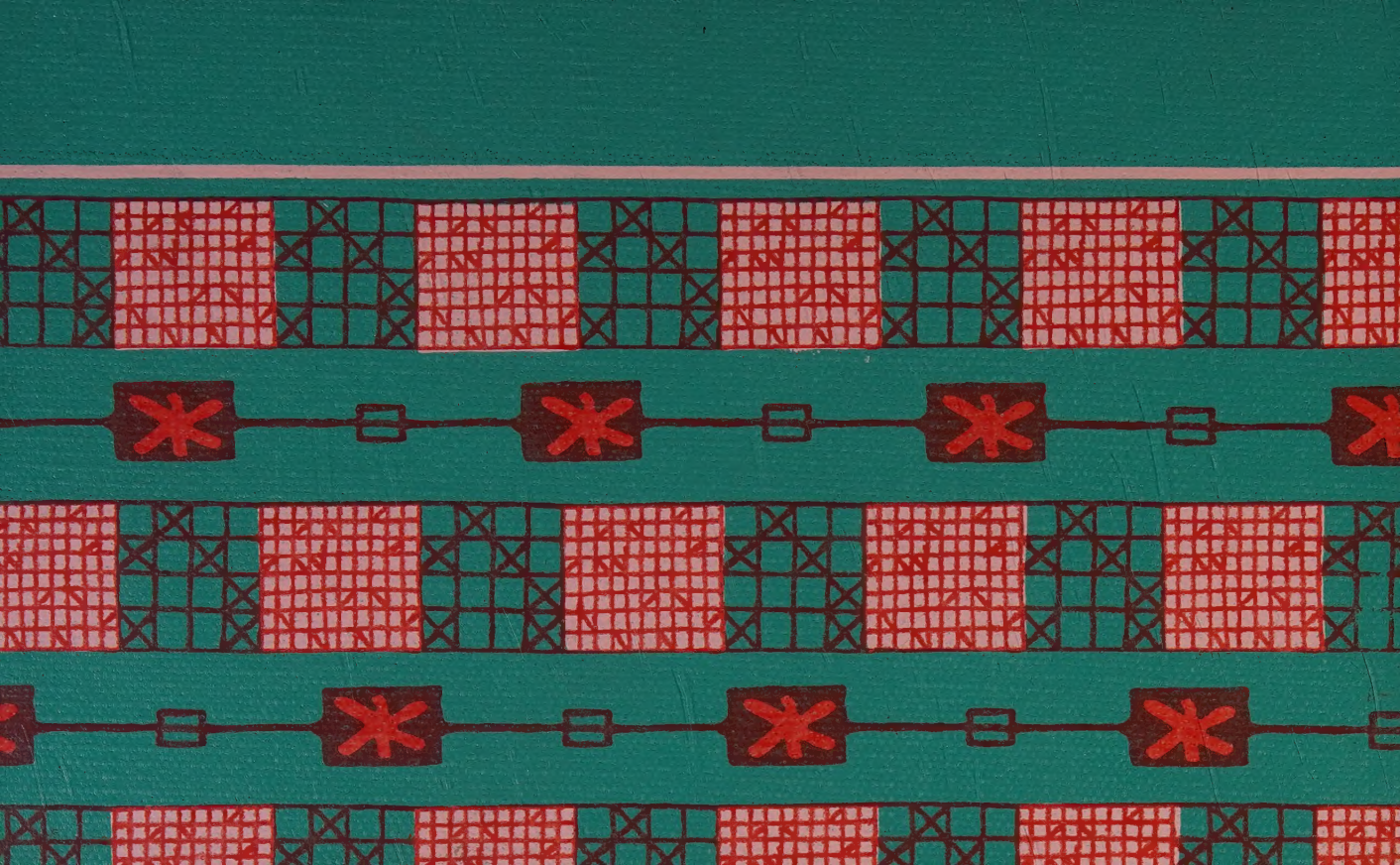
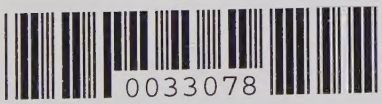


GMSC
Ward Edwards Library
Warrensburg, Missouri

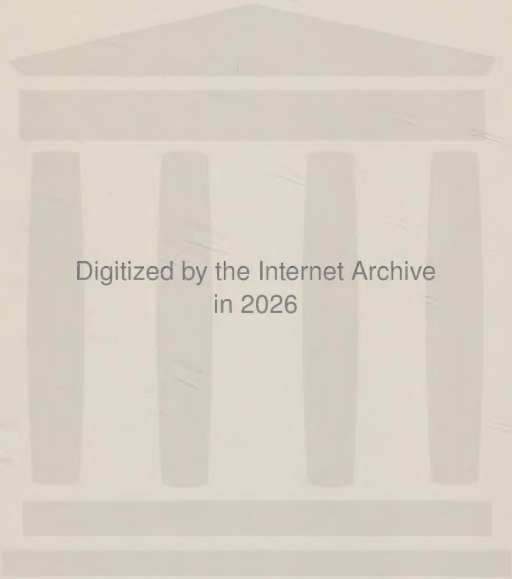


0033078

PR5365 T3 1925

Table-talk of G.B.S. : conversations on things in general

Shaw, Bernard



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/tabletalkofgbs0000arch

Table-Talk *of* G. B. S.

Conversations on Things in General
between
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
and his biographer

By ARCHIBALD HENDERSON

CENTRAL MISSOURI
STA

NEW YORK AND LONDON
Harper & Brothers Publishers
1925

TABLE-TALK OF G. B. S.

Copyright, 1925
By George Bernard Shaw and Archibald Henderson
Printed in the U. S. A.

First Edition

C-Z

PROPERTY OF
TEACHERS COLLEGE
WASHINGTON D.C.

PR
5365
T3
1925

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD . . . . . .

DIALOGUE I.—ON THINGS IN GENERAL 1

DIALOGUE II.—THE DRAMA, THE THEATER, AND THE FILMS 42

DIALOGUE III.—ENGLAND AND AMERICA: CONTRASTS 71

DIALOGUE IV.—LITERATURE AND SCIENCE 89

DIALOGUE V.—THE GREAT WAR AND THE AFTERMATH 118

33028

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
G. B. S. IN HIS LIBRARY . . . . . *Frontispiece*	
Photograph by E. O. Hoppé.	
A QUIET DIALOGUE BETWEEN BERNARD SHAW AND HIS BIOGRAPHER . . . . . *Facing p.*	42
Cartoon by Bohun Lynch.	
A FRAGMENT OF G. B. S.'S MANUSCRIPT "	50
(Facsimile reproduction.)	
G. B. S. DISCUSSES RELATIVITY WITH HIS BIOGRAPHER . . . . . "	114
Cartoon by Bohun Lynch.	

Foreword

TO DAY *Shaw is incomparably the greatest of living dramatists. A critic of painting, music, and the drama, a journalistic free-lance, a novelist, a dramatist, a borough councilor, a leader of the Fabian Society, a remarkable public speaker, a vigorous champion of Communism, an organizer of the Labor Party, a publicist whose utterances are heard round the world—with such a rich background Shaw probably has the most interesting and alert mentality possessed by anyone now living. If he is often the first victim of his own sense of humor, if his destination is often the House of Mirth instead of the Palace of Truth, if he is often impractical in his proposals and fantastic in his criticisms, he never lacks the cardinal virtue of being stimulating, provocative. In the following dialogues he speaks out his mind freely on a wide variety of topics of both current and universal interest.*—A. H.

Table-Talk of G. B. S.

DIALOGUE I

ON THINGS IN GENERAL

A ROOM at 10 Adelphi Terrace, London. Time: February 1, 1924. Shaw's biographer, ARCHIBALD HENDERSON, *tall, smooth shaven, of blond complexion, is examining intently a magnificent photograph of Einstein on the book case. On a chair lie two volumes of the Italian translation of Shaw's plays. Against one wall Mrs. Shaw's writing bureau, roofed like a motor car, bears Rodin's bust of Shaw in bronze. Around are portraits of Nietzsche, Strindberg, and Descartes, Shavian cartoons by Max Beerbohm, landscapes by Flandrin and Sartorio, drawings by Rodin, Sargent, and Rothenstein, a Whistler etching, and some reproductions of work by Philip Webb and Albrecht Dürer. Enter hurriedly, briskly rubbing his hands, his face wreathed in friendly smiles, a tall man dressed in brown—*

unmistakably the great dramatist and critic of world affairs, GEORGE BERNARD SHAW. *The two men greet each other heartily.*

HENDERSON. Well! well! well! My dear Shaw, it's bully to see you again after a round dozen of years. And how well you look! I suspect Sir Almroth Wright has taken a cue from "Back to Methusaleh" and conferred upon you the O. L.—Order of Longevity. Why, when I saw you last you were—shall I say?—lank; your face was unbelievably white, and your beard unmistakably red. To-day you are—shall I say?—heavy; your hair is snow white, it is true, but your face is unbelievably ruddy. The change is very becoming—I can almost believe you have foresworn your Puritanism and Vegetarianism, and become Chesterton's most ardent disciple. Ah! I guess the riddle! You have had the Steinach operation.

SHAW. No, as far as I know, the Steinach operation has produced no results that do not occur spontaneously in occasional cases. And

it is not contended by Steinach or his American followers that the operation has been more than occasionally successful. It is admitted that the alleged rejuvenations do not prolong life. And it is longevity which interests me and not the ghastly prospect of seeing all the moribund people bustling about and pretending to be gay young dogs. The prolongation of life, if it occurs, will occur as in "Back to Methusaleh," and not by vasectomy or by grafting the glands of young animals on old men.

HENDERSON. Just the same, you have not answered my question. I have heard silly stories about your having written *finis* to your career as a dramatist in this colossal, interminable drama of five plays in one, "Back to Methusaleh." And here I find you spryer than ever, with cheeks ruddy as a winter apple; perhaps the greatest play of your life has just been magnificently produced for the first time on any stage in my country, and you are evidently preparing to begin your career as a dramatist all over again. The secret is too

valuable to be lost. So be a good fellow and tell me how you succeeded in remaining so youthful.

SHAW. I don't. I look my age; and I *am* my age. It is the other people who look older than they are. What can you expect from people who eat corpses and drink spirits?

HENDERSON. So you mean that as a challenge? Don't you know, my dear G. B. S., that we have National Prohibition in my country? Didn't Dame Lloyd George say in Chicago not long ago that, after the noble example set by the United States (and so resolutely broken by her law-abiding citizens every hour, may I interpolate?), England could not long lag behind? After whisky, brandy, light wines, and beers, it is openly prophesied that later we may well expect to see tobacco, chewing gum, candy, and what not, put in the Index. Why not the flesh of the corpses of animals as well? The Socialist State would have to expropriate the tobacco and chewing gum kings and the packers—and that is too

expensive an experiment so soon after the *Weltkrieg*. But to get back to the eternal question—Ponce de Leon's quest of the fountain of youth—what, after all, *is* the secret of longevity?

SHAW. If I knew I should not be what I am. How often must I repeat that such a discovery as the secret of longevity would change the character and conduct of the man who discovered it to such an extent that he would be in effect a different man. Louis XV said: "*Après moi, le déluge.*" I said, in the appendix to "Man and Superman": "Every man over forty is a scoundrel." Take your Louis XV, and your man just turned forty, and convince him that he has another century or two to live. Would Louis have let things slide and provoked 1789? Would the man of forty bank on his being over military age and hound on his juniors to war? It is the time ahead of a man that controls him, not the time behind him. When the secret of longevity is discovered, or, as is more probable, when the thing occurs without being less a

secret than it is at present—I am sixty-seven; but I can't tell you the secret of being sixty-seven any more than you can tell me the secret of being forty-six—the human race will become quite different to our present shortlived mob.

HENDERSON. Very well—have it your own way: I believe you always do, anyway. In any case I am glad to see you and to be back in England again. But I find that, as usual, I have been deceived by the Press. For six years it has been dinned into my ears that England and the United States were the Damon and Pythias of nations. English-speaking Unions, Sulgrave Institutions, monuments and memorials to Washington, Lincoln, and Walter Hines Page, the Washington Conference for Limitation of Armaments, and what not testify to this beautiful *rapprochement*. But all my old friends here—after greeting me warmly—soon blurt out: "Well, Henderson, if you want brutal frankness, we all feel that Wilson came over here, lured us into the League of Nations, then deserted us in the hour of need, leaving us

to 'hold the bag'—and 'got away with the swag.'" To all of which I reply that our failure to join the League of Nations was a matter of local American politics, that the Irreconcilables deliberately "ditched" Wilson for party advantage, that a great majority of the American people probably desire to-day to enter the League of Nations and would do so if a national plebiscite free of local politics could be taken on the question; and lastly—that after putting the quietus on the Central Empires and sacrificing incalculable blood and treasure without the acquisition of a foot of territory, the United States is reviled like a yeggman for "going off with the swag" because she is businesslike enough to collect the debts justly due her by the Allies. One prominent Englishman actually told me that the *intelligentsia* in Great Britain regretted now that the United States ever entered the World War because of the great mess we had bequeathed to her through our ignoble refusal to share the burdens of winning the peace! Our own former Ambassador,

Mr. George Harvey, even chose to denigrate the crusading spirit of his own countrymen (for which he was roundly excoriated in the American Press, irrespective of party) in the statement in a speech in England that Americans went into the World War, not to save Europe, but—to save their own skins! Do you believe that is true?

SHAW. No; they entered it to take Germany's scalp under all sorts of romantic delusions and pretexts. The Ku Klux Klan lynches and flogs and tars and feathers because it likes these sports; but it has to find patriotic excuses for believing that negroes should be outlawed, Catholics exterminated, and inconvenient people taught Klan manners. Americans at large rushed to the front because they wanted to fight, to indulge in virtuous indignation, to see the Old World, to escape from their homes and have adventures of all sorts, to strike a blow for their ideals, and to prove to themselves and others that they were not cowards. Also, of course, because they could

not help themselves. But under all these heads it is truer to say that they entered the war to risk their skins than to save them. Mr. Harvey gives them credit for more horse sense than they possessed. But in modern states the people have no choice. They are told they are at war, and must go to the trenches. If an individual American objects on the ground that he will perhaps be shot by the enemy, the reply is that if he refuses he will certainly be shot by his friends at dawn next day. In this sense Americans may be said to have risked their skins to save their skins. But there would have been plenty of volunteers without compulsion, as there were at first in England; and their personal motives cannot be disposed of as mere self-preservation. The psychology of war is much more complicated than that. War fever is a curious disease and very infectious.

HENDERSON. But we have wandered away from the original idea. You have been execrated for publicly asserting, prior to the Washington Conference, that England wanted to

fight America. Perhaps you were misquoted. Like Nietzsche, you are a "good European." May I ask whether you would like to see an alliance or union of the English-speaking peoples?

SHAW. People should execrate me for things I have said, not for the things that fools say I have said. I think there should be an alliance of all the peoples who are psychologically homogeneous enough to share one another's ideas. A common language certainly makes an alliance easier; though you must not forget that it also makes quarreling easier. The Americans and Chinese may utter endless insults to each other and be none the worse, because neither understands the other; but an American insult to the English or an English insult to the Americans might lead to a war. As a matter of fact, Anglo-American relations have always been strained for this very reason. No quarrels are as frequent and angry as family quarrels. Remember, too, that an alliance between Canada and the United States is much more

clearly indicated geographically than an alliance between Canada and the British Islands, to say nothing of Canada and British East Africa. The political world may integrate on geographic rather than on linguistic lines. An alliance of Germany, France, the British Empire, and the United States is what was wanted in 1913; and it is still urgently needed in spite of the three languages involved. Without it there can be no real peace in the world.

HENDERSON. Perhaps the best interests of civilization would be subserved, not by an alliance of the English-speaking peoples, but by the entry of all the nations into the League of Nations. It is an open question—a question of grave import—whether the United States should join the League of Nations as at present constituted.

SHAW. It would be a good thing for the League of Nations, which would be a somewhat less glaring imposture with the United States in than it is with the United States out. But you have to remember that the United States

is itself a League of Nations, and a much more genuine and psychologically homogeneous one than the Geneva makeshift. This North American League may reasonably say to Europe: "Make your European League a reality by getting in Germany and Russia, and we may then consider how far the North American League can co-operate with the European one."

HENDERSON. What is the way out of the Ruhr difficulty?

SHAW. The way out of the Ruhr is the way in, traversed in the opposite direction: I am tired of saying that plundering and kicking the enemy to death when he is down should not be called fine names like Reparation and Indemnity and the like. Germany must be left alone to restore herself; and if she cannot she must be restored at the cost of the conquerors. Many English, French, and Americans, wounded and captured, were restored to health in German hospitals by German nurses and doctors at Germany's expense. Many Germans were equally cared for in English, French, and

American hospitals. Why should peace be more unchristian than war? Europe cannot afford to ruin Germany. That is another way of saying that Europe cannot afford war; but having indulged in that extravagance, all the less can she afford to make matters worse by refusing to stop after Germany has thrown down her arms. One would think she might have learned from the example—or rather the warning—of your big Civil War. The North abused its victory for fifteen years, and then had to admit that it had lost a great deal and gained nothing but the gratification of its basest spirits. The Allies have abused their victory infamously for six years, and are being pulled up with a much shorter turn. When nations proceed against one another by civil action in a supernational court they can with some countenance ask for damages. But if they proceed by violence they must take knocks as well as give them. Imagine Carpentier suing Dempsey for reparations! The whole business is too silly for words.

33078

HENDERSON. I have been deeply impressed by the wholesale elimination in Berlin of all popular reminders of the recent Hohenzollern regime. It is true that the Democrats and Bolshevists have shown extraordinary self-restraint in not demolishing the *Sieges Allée;* but whereas the windows of all the shops and bookstalls are filled with pictures and busts of Frederick the Great, there is no trace of Kaiser Wilhelm or the Kronprinz. *Hohenzollernismus ist spurlos versenkt.* The great soldier Von Ludendorff made a humiliatingly abortive *Putsch* in Bavaria in the interest of Rupprecht; and militaristic demonstrations seem to be on the wane in Germany. I am told that the democratic government of Ebert is now accepted in good faith by the people generally. There still exists to some extent a popular delusion in England and the United States that the German people believe they would be better off under a monarchy.

SHAW. It is quite useless to discuss the question; the monarchy was not equal to the

occasion. If the Kaiser and the Emperor had had the gumption to meet the Russian attack singly, leaving their undefended backs to the honor of the west, it is not easy to see what excuse France could have found for falling on them; and certainly neither England nor the United States could have joined her in such a betrayal of civilization. But militarism had half terrified, half excited these monarchs out of their wits, as it always does; and they tried to fight the whole world without sufficient preparation to take Liège in the few hours which were all they had to spare if they were to get to Paris in a fortnight. Imperial monarchy cannot survive defeat; and the republics which take its place have to learn to govern as best they can. They are still, by the way, making a horrible mess of it.

HENDERSON. President Wilson during the World War used a phrase which gained wide currency: that the United States entered the World War "to make the world safe for democracy." The trend of events in the world to-

day—Germany, Austria, Greece, Turkey, Russia—indicate that this phrase was deeply prophetic. Monarchy reads the handwriting on the wall. The growth of republicanism, of democracy, is one of the most significant movements of this post-war epoch. Lenin is dead; Bolshevism is fighting a losing fight in Russia. The future belongs to democracy and to Socialism: they will stand at Armageddon and battle for ultimate world-dominion. As one of the most consistent advocates of Socialism in its original meaning, you must note with interest, if not with concern, the growth of republicanism, of democracy, throughout the world.

Shaw. My dear Henderson, democracy, as we practice it, is ruinous nonsense. All the republics are whited sepulchers. What you need, as I have so often pointed out, is an anthropometric method by which you can grade men according to their political capacity. If you could discover such a method you could form panels of persons eligible for the different grades of political work: for instance, Panel

A, of persons capable of diplomacy and finance; Panel B, persons capable of general Congress work as representatives; Panel C, of State legislature representation; Panel D, municipal affairs; Panel E, village councils, and so on. You could then let your voters elect to Congress from Panel B, to State Legislatures from Panel C, to city corporations from Panel D; and when they had elected these bodies within these limits, you could limit the Cabinets to Panel A. The people would welcome such a guide to capacity: they know now by experience that the men who get round them most easily under the present indiscriminate system are either humbugs or blackguards. The difficulty is to find the method. Examinations are useless: they test knowledge, not capacity: in fact, they operate against the capable man who has only his own subject and takes his own view of it, in favor of the mere memorizer who can parrot all the text books on all the subjects. If our public bodies were formed, like juries, haphazard from the rate-book, you would get a few

first-rate men in the mere chapter of accidents. Popular election absolutely excludes such men, because the impulse of the ordinary citizen when he meets a superior man is to tar and feather him, not to vote for him. Votes to Everybody and Votes for Anybody is making civilization a rush of Gadarene swine down a steep place into the sea.

HENDERSON. Granting all you say, for the sake of argument—for I am not interested at the moment in launching forth upon a defence of democracy, which admittedly has many faults and weaknesses—I prefer rather to discuss the meaning and significance of Socialism, in its various forms, as a social and political system. In my biography of you, I have endeavored to make clear just what you believe regarding social organization and the future of society. However, for the reader's sake, I propose to ask you a few questions which may elicit the desired explication. For example, I shall begin with this (quite silly, of course—

knowing you as I do) question: Are you an anarchist?

SHAW. Good God, no. Read my *Impossibilities of Anarchism*. I am a Communist. Anarchism means the absence of law. Communism involves a very elaborate legal structure. An Anarchist is apt to think that because he can light his pipe without any law, a street could be lighted without it. The streets of America are lighted by Communism, and the people of America have their heads clubbed by communal policemen (mostly Irish, I understand); but they don't know it, and use Anarchist, Communist, Bolshevik, Thug, Cheap Skate, and so forth quite indiscriminately as terms of abuse. So please don't attempt to explain my views when you return home; you will only be misunderstood.

HENDERSON. Quite right—as I have found to my sorrow in the innumerable attempts I have hitherto made, from the platform and in the public prints. To the average American, to be a Socialist is (as you so suggestively say

in English slang) to "go off the deep end." Since I cannot hope to explain you to my countrymen, I am asking you to explain yourself. To continue our cathechism then: Are you a Socialist?

SHAW. There you go! I have told you that I am a Communist; and you calmly ask me am I a Socialist, as if a man could be a Communist without being a Socialist. But every civilized man is a Communist and a Socialist to some extent, when he is not a frank criminal; and even a criminal would hardly advocate the destruction of the Brooklyn Bridge and let every man provide his own plank. Note, by the way, that because you would not communize alcohol you have had to abolish it. You may find yet, if you don't communize capital, that you will have to abolish *it*, and take to the simple life with a vengeance.

HENDERSON. Yes, I well remember your address before the Fabian Society on the startling theme: "Is Civilization Desirable?" And I well remember your retort when some woman,

after the speech was over, asked you if you didn't think the world, by following your counsel, would "lapse into barbarism." Your reply was: "My dear Madam, I object to your use of the word lapse. How is it possible to lapse into a state in which we already are?" I would take the words out of your mouth, and say that Russia under the Bolshevik regime of Lenin and Trotzky has come nearer than any civilized country since France in the Revolution to lapsing into barbarism. With this agreeable preface may I now ask if you are a Bolshevist?

Shaw. My dear fellow, either the word Bolshevist means nothing at all, or Mussolini and d'Annunzio, Poincaré and Lloyd George and Hamar Greenwood, Mitchell Palmer and the whole Ku Klux Klan, are Bolshevists. All statesmen or adventurers who resort to martial law and suspend constitutional safeguards in an emergency without regard to whether they are in a minority or majority, are Bolshevists. Karl Marx said what was obvious enough: that

if there came a revolution, its leaders would have to bridge over the ensuing chaos by assuming a dictatorship. If it were a Socialist Revolution, the dictatorship would proclaim its aim by calling itself the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. That is what happened in Russia; and it got accidentally called Bolshevism. But there is no revolution here; so how can I be a Bolshevist? Now that the chaos has been bridged in Russia, the Bolshevist leaders are sweeping up Bolshevism and sweeping it out.

HENDERSON. Since the death of Lenin, the two most interesting figures in Europe to me are Maximilian Harden and Benito Mussolini. Harden is a courageous man, a free spirit—who speaks out his mind without regard for consequences to himself. Harden and you were the only voices with world power which were not hushed or stilled by blood madness or war mania. Although I disagreed with your "historical parallel" between British squirarchy and *Deutsches Junkerdom* (there is no valid parallel between Sir Edward Grey and

a jingoistic Junker of the type of von Oldenburg-Januschau, for example), there is no longer any doubt that your "Common Sense about the War" was an extraordinary document which time and events have virtually validated. Again and again, Harden spoke out in a voice of thunder but with the language of reason, giving wise counsel to his people and taking a world-view of international affairs—eventually paying for his freedom of speech with wounds which came near proving fatal. Since the World War a spectacular figure has come upon the world scene as the incarnation of a new political ideal in Italy. Mussolini is Napoleonic in his methods—magnetic, dictatorial, imperialistic. The name coined for this new brand of political and social thinking is Fascism. It seems to be an Italian brand of Bolshevism.

SHAW. Yes, so far, Fascism is middle-class Bolshevism; and Bolshevism, I repeat, is an emergency policy like martial law. Mussolini, as a dictator, saved Italian industry from

wreckage by amateurs whose administrative incompetence and ignorance of the arts of government he, being an old Socialist, knew only too well. But now that the danger is over, the fundamental difference of opinion between the bourgeoisie and the Socialist is bound to come to the surface. Mussolini may sell out and become a mere careerist-opportunist like the rest of the politicians. He may stand by his guns. Until his choice appears, it is no use my thinking of him at all: I can only suspend judgment pending the event. But I will say this. I think there may be something in Mussolini's notion that we are in for a reaction against Anarchism and toward devotion and discipline. I will say something more. Mussolini has frightened Europe. When the Italian fleet fired on the children of Corfu, and Mussolini explained that it was necessary to cure the Italians of their slavery to newspaper phrases by a gesture of burning realism, he carried theatrical nonsense to the verge of insanity; and nothing but the terror he inspired in the

Powers saved Italy being called to account for the murder of those children. By the way, I never said that our British Jingoes were Junkers. Not more than two per cent of them had any such social pretensions. A Junker is simply a member of the country-gentleman class: Viscount Grey is as authentic a Junker as Bismarck was. I simply warned our patriots not to use words they did not understand, and incidentally emphasized the fact that the militaristic morality of Lord Roberts and Mr. Winston Churchill was precisely that of the German militarists.

HENDERSON. Our time is running short. You will have to be off to speak on behalf of the Labor Party, on Vegetarianism, or Communism, or Fabianism, or what not. You are such an incorrigible publicist that I have not yet got round to literature, or the drama which is popularly supposed to be one of your chief interests. First of all, there seems to prevail the view that literature had to begin all over again on November 11, 1918. The follies of 1914

were scotched forever on August 1 of that year, we are told—and a new school of purity, beauty, and solemnity has been inaugurated—shall we say with the *Ulysses* of Joyce, the *La Garçonne* of Marguéritte, the *Jurgen* of Cabell, the *My Life and My Loves* of Harris? As a matter of fact, did the World War mark the end of a literary era?

SHAW. The war made an end of nothing but the things it was meant to aggrandize or preserve, and of a good many of the people who wished to aggrandize and preserve them. It made an end of three empires, two of them moderately abominable and the third utterly abominable. Art and literature and morals were simply knocked back by it half a century. Long-dead fashions were blown out of their graves and sent dancing round, rattling their moldy bones in a ghastly manner for the amusement of soldiers on leave from the front who had never seen civilized cities before. It was impossible to rake up stuff crude enough for these innocents and the squealing flappers who

came with them to the theaters and variety shows. Instead of inaugurating a new era, the war let loose a new audience which was fifty years behind the time; and until this new audience catches up, say fifty years hence, it will eat up all the capital available for the theater, leaving the highbrows more starved than ever. The good side of this setback is that it is a promotion in culture for the new audience, and also that the new audience is less sophisticated than the old experienced playgoers, and, in forcing the drama back to more primitive forms, may actually improve it. Art, like life, has to renew itself by returning repeatedly to its childhood and burying its dead. A revival of "Pink Dominos" would be a public nuisance; but a revival of "Maria Martin or the Murder in the Red Barn," or of "George Barnwell" or of "Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street" (the dialogue of which is classic compared to the stuff written to-day) would be quite a hopeful sign.

HENDERSON. I have been genuinely im-

pressed with what seems like a phenomenon—the extraordinary revival of popular interest in Shakespeare in the United States and Great Britain. In New York City, the dramatic and theatrical center of the world, magnificent productions of Shakespeare's plays have been given since the World War—"Hamlet," "Romeo and Juliet," "Macbeth," "Troilus and Cressida," "The Merchant of Venice," and many others—by the Barrymores, Jane Cowl and Rollo Peters, Walter Hampden, David Warfield, James K. Hackett, Marlowe and Sothern, and whoever else. In London, at the "Old Vic," all thirty-six of Shakespeare's plays in the First Folio were produced in succession, at exceedingly cheap prices, to crowded houses—delighted children, chambermaids, and women of fashion, the man-in-the street, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker (among whom I was happy on more than one occasion to count myself). Surely this is a hopeful sign for the theater.

Shaw. It dates from before the war. You

must remember that the introduction of the pictorial stage into the theater—it came in under Cromwell with the opera—banished Shakespeare from the boards for two hundred and fifty years. Shakespeare's plays are written to occupy a certain time in performance, a time which he sometimes stretched to the limit of an audience's endurance. Of that time the sceneshifters, the moment they were let into the theater with their cumbrous pictures, demanded an hour for "striking" the scenes and setting them, during which hour the refreshment bars flourished. Now you can no more cut an hour out of a play and have your play too than you can cut a yard out of the Sistine Madonna and have Raphael's picture too. At first the crude machinery of wings and flats, by which scenes could be changed in full view of the audience two or three times during an act, confined the damage to interruptions and omissions; but in my early days, when the wings and flats were discarded as too grossly absurd, and the play had to be forced into five long scenes, one for

each act, the rearrangement had to be effected by mutilations and repiecings which would have sickened the staff of a Chicago abattoir. The horror culminated in the hands of Henry Irving and Augustin Daly. People went to see Irving and Ellen Terry and John Drew and Ada Rehan; and they imagined they were seeing Shakespeare as well, and cursed him for an uninteresting and unintelligible bore. William Poel protested, and made desperate attempts to return to Shakespeare. Harley Granville-Barker played "Richard II" in one of Poel's attempts. Finally Granville-Barker, having become a fashionable manager, presented "A Winter's Tale" with only four impossibly indecent lines omitted. Shakespeare returned to life immediately. Having died a lingering death at Stratford of a production of "Coriolanus" cut down to one hour, he was revived triumphantly by Granville-Barker's successor, Bridges Adams, who got rid of the old scene-shifters and acts and intervals and built-up sets, and gave the public Shakespeare instead.

The Old Vic. did likewise and now you have Shakespeare pleasing everybody without any Garricks or Kembles or Siddonses or Keans or Macreadys or Booths or Barry Sullivans to help them. That is the whole secret of it. I wish you would explain it to Mr. Hackett, whose production of "Macbeth" in London seemed a grotesque anachronism to the public of Granville-Barker and the Old Vic.

HENDERSON. Ah! my dear Shaw, your theatrical education will remain incomplete until you come to New York and see Shakespeare done majestically, magnificently and by great players. All the actors and actresses I have mentioned are either great or very distinguished artists, whereas there are no great or even distinguished interpreters of Shakespeare in England to-day. And your explanation, valid though it may be and, I believe, certainly is for England, does not explain the revival of Shakespeare in the United States. The explanation, there, I believe, is simple enough: great acting. Where there are great

actors and actresses, there will Shakespeare inevitably be played. But to speak of Shakespeare reminds me of Shaw. The New York Theater Guild, which has recently produced for the first time on any stage your last two plays, must certainly have convinced you of the supremacy of the New York stage, *nicht wahr?* And it is Shaw, the author of "Saint Joan," a "chronicle play," who is now competing in New York with Shakespeare, the master of the chronicle play. I want to ask you some questions about Joan of Arc. Perhaps you have seen the play of that name by the American dramatist, Percy MacKaye, successfully produced by Marlowe and Sothern?

Shaw. Yes, I saw Miss Marlowe play it. She was very soft and very sweet: that is, about as like Joan as Joan's kitten was like Joan's charger. Nobody could possibly have burned Miss Marlowe: Job himself would have burned the real Joan. Mind, I am not blaming Miss Marlowe: she did the job she was given and did it very well. She was called on to make

Joan pitiable, sentimental, and in the technical melodramatic sense "sympathetic." And whoever does that makes Joan's fate unintelligible, and, in my opinion, makes Joan herself vapid and uninteresting.

HENDERSON. It is a rather singular fact that men who make a business of exciting other people's laughter—whether by humor, wit, satire, or irony—should show such a predisposition toward Joan of Arc as a subject for novel and drama—heroic, tragic, saintly figure that she unquestionably is. I think of Mark Twain, the American humorist, who regarded *Joan of Arc* as his best work, and it was certainly his own favorite; Anatole France, the ineffably sophisticated and silken ironist; Andrew Lang, a wit if there ever was one; and yourself—whom we claim as our leading satirist of to-day. Why do you mirth-provoking, laughter-loving people write about Joan of Arc?

SHAW. Because Joan, in her rough shrewd way, was a little in that line herself. All souls

of that sort are in conflict with the official gravity in which so much mental and moral inferiority disguises itself as superiority. Joan knocked over the clerical, legal, and military panjandrums of her time like ninepins with her trenchant commonsense and mother wit; and though they had the satisfaction of burning her for making them ridiculous, they could not help raising up indignant champions for her by that same stroke. Besides, pious as Joan was, she was an anti-clerical, devoted to the Church Triumphant in heaven, but with a deep mistrust of "*les gens d'Eglise*" who constitute the Church Militant on earth. Well, the three writers you mention are all anti-clericals. Andrew Lang, the least of the three, made the fewest mistakes about her. If he had not made her a border-ballad beauty (Joan was neither pretty nor ugly: she was completely neutral in that respect) he would be less open to criticism than the other two, who were men of genius. Mark Twain made her a compound of a Victorian schoolmarm in armor and six

petticoats with the Duke of Wellington. Both he and Lang made her the heroine of a melodrama with the Catholic Church as the villain, which is utter nonsense: her trial and sentence were quite as legal as, and much fairer than, most modern political trials. Anatole France was disabled by his Anti-Feminism: he could not credit Joan with mental superiority to the Statesmen and Churchmen and Captains of her time; and as her superiority is the simple explanation of the whole affair, he makes very good shooting at the Church, but misses the bull's eye.

HENDERSON. My dear G. B. S., you are commonly charged by those who do not know you personally with being inordinately vain. Yet I observe that you modestly omitted your name from the catalogue. Would you mind telling me why *you* chose Joan of Arc as a dramatic subject?

SHAW. Why not? Joan is a first-class dramatic subject ready made. You have a heroic character, caught between "the fell in-

censéd points" of the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire, between Feudalism and Nationalism, between Protestantism and Ecclesiasticism, and driven by her virtues and her innocence of the world to a tragic death which has secured her immortality. What more do you want for a tragedy as great as that of Prometheus? All the forces that bring about the catastrophe are on the grandest scale; and the individual soul on which they press is of the most indomitable force and temper. The amazing thing is that the chance has never been jumped at by any dramatic poet of the requisite caliber. The pseudo-Shakespearean Joan ends in mere jingo scurrility. Voltaire's mock-Homeric epic is an uproarious joke. Schiller's play is romantic flapdoodle. All the modern attempts known to me are second-rate opera books. I felt personally called on by Joan to do her dramatic justice; and I don't think I have botched the job.

HENDERSON. Thanks for the explanation, which gave you a chance, I observe, to prove

that you are at least not mock-modest. As I must hurry off now, I have time to bring up just two more points. Is St. John Ervine right: that comedy flourishes to-day because this is the Age of Women, and that tragedy is passing with the passing of the virile Era of Man? You are a writer of comedies and ought to know.

SHAW. I always thank God for Ervine's delightful rashness; but his sallies have to be turned over once or twice to find out what he is really getting at. I do not believe that men have a sterner taste in the theater than women: they are just as fond of happy endings, and are much more sentimental. Women, having all the trouble and pain of creating human life, are less tolerant of slaughterous waste of it; and as tragedy used to mean simply strewing the stage with corpses in the fifth act with no excuse but balderdash, I think the influence of women has helped to banish tragedy of that kind from the literary stage—and a good job too! But it still flourishes on the operatic

stage: your heroes and heroines can die all right if they die to music. I do not demur to the statement that the Age of Women has come in the theater. Just compare the heroines of Wagner and Ibsen with the dolls that preceded them, or with such dirty dishonorable little female cads as Lady Teazle, whom Sheridan expected women to admire! Compare my Joan of Arc with Schiller's: she will give you a measure of the difference.

HENDERSON. I am sincerely sorry our hour is at an end. But since this is my last opportunity for some weeks to interrogate you again, perhaps I can summon the nerve to fire one parting question at you from the door. You are a world-dramatist, played in all the capitals of the civilized globe from New York to Tokyo; and wherever two or three are gathered together in the Little Theaters, there is Shaw in the midst of them. Despite the adverse judgment of the Elder Critics, who prophesy the disappearance of your plays with your

demise, do you yourself think your plays are destined to become part of a permanent repertory of classic British drama?

SHAW. Good-by! Good luck! And as for your question, why!—I don't think about the destiny of my plays. But since you put the case to me, I should say that until the standard of British dramatic poetry goes up sufficiently to scrap everything from Shakespeare to Shaw, Shaw will be among the Panjandrums. But that is a very cheap boast. Have you ever realized what a very poor business this classic British drama is if you disregard the sound of it and judge it by its sense, or want of sense? Cut the police news—the murders and so forth—out of the tragedies, and the indecencies out of the comedies, and how much is there left that has any encouragement or enlightenment for any soul to-day? Remember that the British theater was forbidden to touch politics or religion, or to say a sincere word about sex. Crime and lust and horseplay, deprived of all moral significance or psychological analysis,

were its only permitted alternatives to conventional romance. It was allowed and encouraged to make the stage an attractive advertisement for prostitution and to drive the young to the brothel by the most potent of aphrodisiacs; but when I dramatized the truth about prostitution in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," the play was at once prohibited. How could you possibly have a great classic drama under such conditions? Can you say of Dryden, Congreve, and Sheridan that they took the theater seriously? Not one of them. Does the attempt, promptly discouraged, of Goldsmith go far enough to count? No. Goethe took the theater seriously. Ibsen took it seriously. Wagner took it seriously. Molière took it seriously. Shakespeare made a few attempts, notably in "Hamlet," to accuse the world of being all wrong—"out of joint," as he put it—but he attached these protests to incongruous borrowed plots and tinkerings of old plays, and never made any attempt to get down to the roots of the evil and imposture he saw every-

where. So that finally you cannot claim that Shakespeare took the theater seriously. I did; and I have been followed by some of the younger men. That would have given me a peculiar eminence even if my specific talent for the theater had been less lucky than it is. I may be eclipsed by my contemporaries and successors, but not by the classical British playwrights who all belong to the theatrical dark ages, and did not get beyond sticking purple patches on secondhand rags. Most of them were ashamed of their profession, not without reason. Perhaps that is why so many people seem to think me immodest because I am not ashamed of mine.

DIALOGUE II

THE DRAMA, THE THEATER, AND THE FILMS

THE dining room at 10 Adelphi Terrace, London. Time: late March, 1924, just after the production of Shaw's latest play, "Saint Joan," at the New Theater, London. A room full of sunshine overlooking the narrow gorge of the Adelphi. The walls are sparsely decorated, the principal object in the room (besides the original) being a portrait of Bernard Shaw which startlingly confronts you on entering the room—the impressionist, posterlike portrait by Augustus John, with flying locks and mustaches, rectangular head, and exaggeratedly flouting lower lip—done in bright colors: reds, yellows, blues. Its close analogue, a superior study and a better likeness, hangs in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. BERNARD SHAW *and* ARCHIBALD HENDERSON *discovered.*

seated at opposite ends of the dinner table, à deux. *During the course of the meal the food is often sadly neglected for the sake of argument—the Irishman waving his long arms and tapering fingers, the American energetically hammering his closed right fist in his left, open palm.*

HENDERSON. Well, I must say you made a neat get-away at the New the other night. One moment I was talking to you in your private box and the next Miss Sybil Thorndike was explaining to an audience stentoriously shouting "Author! Author!" that, *as usual under such circumstances*, the author was not to be found. Your wife and Miss Lena Ashwell must have spirited you mysteriously away. I felt defrauded—robbed of a long-anticipated pleasure of hearing you make a footlight speech. Of course, I understood that you wished Miss Thorndike to have all the honors for playing beautifully the title role in your greatest play.

And now to come to the films. Has the

enormous development of the cinema industry benefited the drama, or the reverse?

SHAW. No: the colossal proportions make mediocrity compulsory. They aim at the average of an American millionaire and a Chinese coolie, a cathedral-town governess and a mining-village barmaid, because the film has to go everywhere and please everybody. They spread the drama enormously, but as they must interest a hundred per cent of the population of the globe, barring infants in arms, they cannot afford to meddle with the upper-ten-per-cent theater of the highbrows or the lower-ten-per-cent theater of the blackguards. The result is that the movie play has supplanted the old-fashioned tract and Sunday-school prize: it is reeking with morality but dares not touch virtue. And virtue, which is defiant and contemptuous of morality even when it has no practical quarrel with it, is the lifeblood of high drama.

HENDERSON. In spite of the fame of certain artistic directors—the Griffiths, De

Milles, Lubitschs, and Dwans—perhaps it is true that the film industry is, for the most part, directed and controlled by people with imperfectly developed artistic instincts and ideals who have their eyes fixed primarily on financial rewards.

SHAW. All industries are brought under the control of such people by Capitalism. If the capitalists let themselves be seduced from their pursuit of profits to the enchantments of art, they would be bankrupt before they knew where they were. You cannot combine the pursuit of money with the pursuit of art.

HENDERSON. Would it not be better for film magnates to engage first-rate authors to write directly for the films, paying them handsomely for their work, rather than paying enormous prices to an author of novel, story, or play, and then engaging a hack at an absurdly low price to prepare a scenario?

SHAW. Certainly not first-rate authors: democracy always prefers second-bests. The magnates might pay for literate subtitles; but

one of the joys of the cinema would be gone without such gems as "Christian: Allah didst make thee wondrous strong and fair." Seriously, though, the ignorance which leads to the employment of uneducated people to do professional work in modern industry is a scandal. It is just as bad in journalism. In my youth all writing was done by men who, if they had little Latin and less Greek, had at any rate been in schools where there was a pretense of teaching them; and they had all read the Bible, however reluctantly. Nowadays that has all gone: literary work is intrusted to men and women so illiterate that the mystery is how they ever learned their alphabet. They know next to nothing else, apparently. I agree with you as to the scenarios founded on existing plays and novels. Movie plays should be invented expressly for the screen by original imaginative visualizers. But you must remember that just as all our music consists of permutations and combinations of twelve notes, all our fiction consists of varia-

tions on a few plots; and it is in the words that the widest power of variation lies. Take that away and you will soon be so hard up for a new variation that you will snatch at anything—even at a Dickens plot—to enable you to carry on.

HENDERSON. American newspapers and magazines teem with articles, interviews, counsels, and admonitions regarding the films and measures for their improvement. Have you in mind any definite suggestions for the further artistic development of films?

SHAW *(explosively)*. Write better films, if you can: there is no other way. Development must come from the center, not from the periphery. The limits of external encouragement have been reached long ago. Take a highbrow play to a Little Theater and ask the management to spend two or three thousand dollars on the production, and they will tell you that they cannot afford it. Take an opium eater's dream to Los Angeles and they will realize it for you: the more it costs the more they will

believe in it. You can have a real Polar expedition, a real volcano, a reconstruction of the Roman Forum on the spot: anything you please, provided it is enormously costly. Wasted money, mostly. If the United States Government put a limit of twenty-five thousand dollars to the expenditure on any single non-educational film, the result would probably be an enormous improvement in the interest of the film drama, because film magnates would be forced to rely on dramatic imagination instead of on a mere spectacle. Oh, those scenes of oriental voluptuousness as imagined by a whaler's cabin boy! They would make a monk of Don Juan. Can you do nothing to stop them?

HENDERSON. The only way to stop them is with ridicule. That is why I am making you talk. Already such scenes are greeted with ribald laughter and shouts of unholy glee in many American communities. But our happiest effects are achieved by having English duchesses impersonated by former cloak mod-

els, Italian counts by former restaurant waiters. In spite of all this the triumph of the American film is spectacular. The invasion of England and Europe is a smashing success. London, Paris, Berlin are placarded with announcements of American films: they are literally everywhere. "The Covered Wagon," "Scaramouche," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," "The Ten Commandments," "Mother," "Nanook": Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, Jackie Coogan, etc., etc. Yet I am told that the Italians make the best films; and the best European picture I saw in Europe was a Swedish film at the Gaumont "Picture Palace" in Paris. The triumph, almost the monopoly of the American film is uncontested. But are American films superior to all others?

SHAW *(decisively)*. No. Many of them are full of the stupidest errors of judgment. Overdone and foolishly repeated strokes of expression, hideous make-ups, close-ups that an angel's face would not bear, hundreds of thou-

sands of dollars spent on spoiling effects that I or any competent producer could secure quickly and certainly at a cost of ten cents, featureless over-exposed faces against under-exposed backgrounds, vulgar and silly subtitles, impertinent lists of everybody employed in the film from the star actress to the press agent's office boy—are only a few of the *gaffes* that American film factories are privileged to make. Conceit is rampant among your film makers; and good sense is about nonexistent. That is where Mr. Chaplin scores: but Mr. Harold Lloyd seems so far to be the only rival intelligent enough to follow his example. We shall soon have to sit for ten minutes at the beginning of every reel to be told who developed it, who fixed it, who dried it, who provided the celluloid, who sold the chemicals, and who cut the author's hair. Your film people simply don't know how to behave themselves: they take liberties with the public at every step on the strength of their reckless enterprise and expenditure. Every American aspirant to film

Are American films superior to all others?

No. Many of them are full of the simplest errors of judgment. Tawdry and foolishly exhibited studies of oppression, violence made gaudy, crass, like that on angel's face called out Dear, hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on spending effects that I or any competent producer could secure quickly and certainly at a cost of ten cents, pasteboard overstrained faces, against underfurnished backgrounds, vulgar and silly sub-titles, important lists of everybody employed on the film from the star actress to the press agent's office boy, are only a few of the goffes that American film factories are privileged to make. Conceit is rampant among your film makers; and good sense is almost non-existent. That is where Mr. Chaplin scores, but Mr. Harold Lloyd seems so far to be the only rival intelligent enough to follow his example. We shall soon have to sit for ten minutes at the beginning of every reel to be told who developed it, who fixed it, who dried it, who provided the celluloid, who sold the chemicals, and who cut the author's hair. Your film people simply don't know how to behave themselves: they take liberties with the public at every step on the strength of their reckless extravagance and expenditure. Every American aspirant to film work should be sent to Denmark or Sweden for five years to undergo their 3-reel being allowed to enter a Douglas studio.

work should be sent to Denmark or Sweden for five years to civilize him before being allowed to enter a Los Angeles studio.

HENDERSON. Well! that's that! And how surprised and pained some American producers will be to read your cruel words! But too much success is not good for anyone—not even for you. And speaking of comets, can plays of conversation—"dialectic dramas"—like yours be successfully filmed?

SHAW. Barrie says that the film play of the future will have no pictures and will consist exclusively of subtitles.

HENDERSON. I wonder if conversation dramas are not on the wane—since the public in countless numbers patronizes, revels in the silent drama.

SHAW. If you come to that, the public in overwhelming numbers is perfectly satisfied with no drama at all. But the silent drama is producing such a glut of spectacle that people are actually listening to invisible plays by wireless. The silent drama is exhausting the re-

sources of silence. Charlie Chaplin and his very clever colleague Edna Purviance, Bill Hart and Alla Nazimova, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford and Harold Lloyd have done everything that can be done in dramatic dumb show and athletic stunting, and played all the possible variations on it. The man who will play them off the screen will not be their superior at their own game but an Oscar Wilde of the movies who will flash epigram after epigram at the spectators and thus realize Barrie's anticipation of more subtitles than pictures.

HENDERSON. If that is true, then why—since wit and epigram are your familiar weapons—why have none of your plays been filmed?

SHAW *(deadly resolute)*. Because I wouldn't let them. I repeat that a play with the words left out is a play spoiled; and all those filmings of plays written to be spoken as well as seen are boresome blunders except when the dialogue is so worthless that it is a hindrance instead of a help. Of course that is a very

large exception in point of bulk; but the moment you come to classic drama, the omission of the words and the presentation of the mere scenario is very much as if you offered as a statue the wire skeleton which supports a sculptor's modeling clay. Besides, consider the reaction on the box office. People see a Macbeth film. They imagine they have seen "Macbeth," and don't want to see it again; so when your Mr. Hackett or somebody comes round to act the play, he finds the house empty. That is what has happened to dozens of good plays whose authors have allowed them to be filmed. It shall not happen to mine if I can help it.

HENDERSON. The American "invasion" of the European theater is certainly not comparable to the success of the American film. My own observation does not bear out the statement one sometimes hears that, since the World War, British theaters have been filled with American plays.

SHAW *(superciliously)*. I don't know. I

don't go to them often enough to be able to say. When I *do* go it is usually a British play I fall to, though I have looked up Mr. Eugene O'Neill once or twice. But as far as our theaters are filled with the commercial machine-made article, what you suggest may very well be true. America invented the typewriter; and a very little extra ingenuity would suffice to invent an attachment which would turn out what used to be called in Scribe's time a well-made play.

HENDERSON. O'Neill is a playwright of genuine talent and dramatic imagination. Two of his plays were played in Berlin during my stay there. My former query brings up an interesting corollary: Is the British drama at a low ebb to-day?

SHAW *(cryptically)*. All drama is always at a low ebb. Even the Athenian drama in the days of the Great Four (Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes) was in a shocking state.

HENDERSON. Would you say, then, that

the high hopes that Archer and Walkley entertained thirty or thirty-five years ago for the British drama, on the basis of Pinero and Jones, have been sustained?

SHAW. Yes, prodigiously. In the days when Archer was desperately pretending to cherish such hopes to keep up our spirits, there were—leaving out the special case of Gilbert—only two playwrights worth mentioning: Pinero and Jones, and one adapter, Grundy. When Carton, Barrie, Oscar Wilde, and I came along, the number of original playwrights was tripled without counting Buchanan and Stephen Phillips and Fagan, who were only occasional contributors. Four of those are dead; but the remaining six have been reinforced by Archer himself, by Galsworthy, Granville-Barker, Drinkwater, Ervine, Maugham, McEvoy, Glover, Munro, Sutton Vane, Clemence Dane, Milne, the late St. John Hankin, Zangwill, Laurence Housman, Eden Phillpotts, and quite a lot of busy young experimenters whose work I do not happen to have

seen. If I had told Archer and Walkley in 1890 that we should live to see the day when it would be easy to reel off the names of more than twenty practicing serious English playwrights, (the worst of them much better than Grundy, and the best six immensely superior to Augier, Dumas *fils*, Sardou & Co.,) they would have thought me mad; and I should have agreed with them. The change for the better in the British drama, in this century, is more than a mere change: it is a Transfiguration. And our young critics lament its decay and sigh for the golden age of Irving, Tree, Alexander and Wyndham, God help them! Don't forget, by the way, that all these new men are trying to write real plays, and not "constructing" cat's cradles and clockwork mice like the machine-made *nouveautés Parisiennes* of the eighteen sixties.

HENDERSON. I have a book drawn up by Archer and Granville-Barker on plans and estimates for a national theater. At the present

time what is the hope or expectation for The Shakespeare National Memorial Theater?

SHAW *(with a satirical smile)*. Well, after many years of struggle we have had one subscription. The solitary sportsman who gave it was a Hamburg gentleman. When Germany recovers from the War we may get another move on. *Nil desperandum.*

HENDERSON. With talents such as Granville-Barker, Gordon Craig, and Bridges Adams to draw upon for *régisseurs*, with no dearth of reasonably good actors and actresses, with the greatest classic repertory of any nation in the world, and with the dramatists you have mentioned to furnish contemporary plays—why not a British National Theater?

SHAW *(deprecatingly)*. A British National Theater is a contradiction in terms. You can have a Grand National Steeplechase, a Church of England, a British Parliament, and even a National Gallery full of foreign pictures; but though the British are the most theatrical people on earth, they keep it all for politics and

the bar and the quarter-deck, and are jealous of the theater because it gives them away.

HENDERSON. There is a movement in the United States which has produced and continues to produce important and valuable results in the theater. This is the Little Theater movement. Have not the Little Theaters—in both the United States and Great Britain—been far more progressive than the commercial theater in producing your plays?

SHAW. If I were a younger man I could probably say "Yes" without reserve. You must remember that in my time there were no Little Theaters. The Little Theaters were started by people who had been caught in their adolescence by Mansfield's production of "The Devil's Disciple," and Loraine's of "Man and Superman," and Forbes Robertson's of "Cæsar and Cleopatra," which were very big and successful commercial ventures. Daly's "Candida" at the Berkeley Lyceum, a bandbox of a theater, demonstrated the possibility of Little Theaters. They are all to the good: indeed

the best dramatic work of to-day has been kept alive by them; and I make a point of giving them every possible facility as to my own work.

HENDERSON. The history of the New York Theater Guild is a record in which every American interested in the theater feels a genuine pride. But you know all about that!

SHAW *(emphatically)*. Well, it has been the salvation of the drama in New York. But I suppose I must not advertise my own shop.

HENDERSON. In the American university, pioneer work of a remarkable kind has been under way for upward of two decades. The United States is not only the leader in this field: she has no competitor. Our best students and critics of the drama—such as Professor Brander Matthews, Professor George P. Baker, Professor Thomas Wood Stevens, Professor Frederic H. Koch, Walter Prichard Eaton, and many others—have vigorously advanced the view and energetically put it into effect, *viz.*, that people can be taught playwriting. The results, which I cannot take time now to re-

count, have been not unimpressive. Do you think it possible or feasible to teach, to train anyone to become a dramatist—or even a playwright?

SHAW *(vigorously)*. No. Unless Nature has done ninety-nine per cent of the work, the one per cent which can be taught or learned is not worth studying. I know a good deal of stage technic which I did not know when I wrote my first play; but my first play held the audience as effectively as my last. If an author cannot write an effective stage play without any teaching, nothing that he can learn will be of any use to him: he has mistaken his profession.

HENDERSON. Then where does the one per cent come in?

SHAW. In producing, mostly. Mechanical things. Stage tricks. Authors learn them from experience at rehearsals, and until they do, they have to call in producers to take charge of the stage. But every author should be his own producer. The production of a play is an essential part of it, and cannot be done by

anyone else without an alteration of values for better or worse. Still, many of the technical things are trifles, like spelling and paragraphing and punctuation in writing. Sheridan could not spell, and his one stop was a dash; but "The School for Scandal" acts none the worse. He may possibly have been equally careless about the mechanical details of stage business. He could have been taught both. So could the cat. But that teaching would not have made the cat a dramatist.

HENDERSON. At Harvard University, Professor Baker conducts successfully a famous course in playwriting, playbuilding—"English 47." He seems to have proved that he can teach his pupils to become playwrights, some of them artistically and commercially successful playwrights.

SHAW *(diffidently)*. I have no right to criticize a course that I know nothing about. I can say only that when the University of Liverpool invited me to occupy a chair of Drama, I had to reply that I was a practitioner, not a pro-

fessor. But if Professor Baker knows as much as a good producer knows—and he might know this without being a playwright—I see no reason why a natural-born playwright should not benefit by a course of instruction in practical stage conditions. After all, Napoleon went to a military academy; and Michael Angelo learned to use a chisel just as a stone mason's apprentice does. It all depends on Professor Baker's good sense and knowledge of what instruction can do and what it cannot.

HENDERSON. When you finally write the Prefaces or Introductions to your Collected Works, I daresay you will tell us something of the genesis of your plays. Meantime, I want you to "enlighten the world" on the subject of your peculiar technic. For instance, do you usually develop your play from a central idea?

SHAW *(oracularly)*. The play develops itself. I only hold the pen. But sometimes the first thing in my head is some situation like the arrest in "The Devil's Disciple," which may or may not prove a central one in the finished

play. Sometimes it is a remark made in my hearing which is pregnant with a whole play: for instance, "The Doctor's Dilemma" grew from a remark made by Sir Almroth Wright to an assistant in his laboratory at St. Mary's Hospital when he was demonstrating his technical methods for me.

HENDERSON. I wonder if you ever create a set of characters and let the plot develop from their mutual interactions.

SHAW *(authoritatively)*. I avoid plots like the plague. I have warned young playwrights again and again that a plot is like a jigsaw puzzle, enthralling to the man who is putting it together, but maddeningly dull to the looker-on. Stories are interesting, the exhibition of character in action is very much more interesting and, for stage purposes, is the source of the story's interest; but plots are the deadest of dead wood. My procedure is to imagine characters and let them rip, as you suggest; but I must warn you that the real process is very obscure; for the result always shows that there

has been *something behind* all the time, of which I was not conscious, though it turns out to be the real motive of the whole creation.

HENDERSON. You have there a wonderfully fascinating story to tell—if your publishers can drag it out of you. Might it not throw light on the art of playwriting and the craft of dramaturgy if you gave an account of the way you write your plays?

SHAW *(with a disillusioned smile)*. It might possibly kill the superstitution that real plays are constructed. They are no more constructed than a carrot is constructed. They grow naturally. But the property master in any theater can construct a carrot good enough for a stage donkey, and any literary craftsman can construct a sham play good enough for the donkeys in the front of the house.

HENDERSON. Since we are on the subject of your dramatic technic, may I remind you that you are frequently charged by the critics with writing plays which consist only of conversation, dialectic, debate?

SHAW *(not angry, yet not quite calm).* What the devil else can a classical play consist of? I am, and have always been, a classical dramatist; and in saying this I am not pleading guilty to an accusation: I am making the highest claim possible in my profession. You may ask me why I don't write scenarios for the movies, or knock up plots to enable our fascinating leading ladies and matinée idols to come on the stage and enchant the spectators into imagining all the depths of thought and importance of character that don't exist in the plot, and the twaddle by which it is carried on. I can only say that it is easier for me to do the classic work. The plot and twaddle business would be to me the most repulsive drudgery: I had much rather write essays on economics, politics, and so forth. The movies are more tempting: there is a new art there, and I may be tempted to try my hand at it: but after all, if one has the gift of language, asking one to write a dumb show is rather like asking Titian to paint portraits in black and white.

Still, there is one sort of dumb show which is something more than a play with the words left out, and that is a dream. If I ever do a movie show it will have the quality of a dream.

HENDERSON. A friend of mine, relying upon my "nerve," requested me to be sure to ask you some day if your plays are really dramas in the strict sense of the term. Consider yourself asked!

SHAW *(vastly amused)*. You remind me of a friend of mine who has written some successful plays. In his youth he made his way, trembling, to the presence of Barry Sullivan, then supreme as what the *Times* called the leading legitimate actor of the British stage. "I have written a drama—" he was beginning, when Barry Sullivan, much hurt, interrupted him with, "Sir, I do not play drama: I am a tragedian." Behind the scenes drama means melodrama, a second-class entertainment, not to be confused with comedy and tragedy. It has no muse and no mask in pictorial symbolism. Mrs. Siddons was painted between Comedy and

Tragedy: if a third figure had been introduced by the painter to symbolize Drama, Sarah would have withered the painter with a glance and then stamped on him. So much for your strict sense of the term. My plays are *sui generis;* and to say that they are comedies or tragedies or tragi-comedies or dramas is like saying that I am a Caucasian: it says nothing about them that does not apply to thousands of plays not a bit like them.

HENDERSON *(mischievously).* Just for fun then—why do you write the kind of plays you do?

SHAW *(quite seriously).* Why shouldn't I? What's wrong with them?

HENDERSON. My dear Shaw, if you answer my questions with other questions, I am afraid we'll never get anywhere. Some Freytag of the twentieth century will have to answer your questions some day. You are a "world dramatist"—this is a sufficient answer to the questions just now. What dramatists now living would you class as "world dramatists?"

SHAW. I don't know. I cross all the frontiers from London to Japan both ways round. So does Mr. Chaplin. But when we are inclined to feel conceited about it, we are pulled up by the fact that a good many popular entertainers, whose claims to be at the bottom of their profession are as strong as ours to be at the top of it, get round the world as easily as we.

HENDERSON. As a matter of fact, are not the "world dramatists" passing off the scene, with few or no others in sight to take their place?

SHAW. You cannot tell. The greatness of a dramatist is not a space dimension but a time dimension. How do you know where I shall stand as a dramatist when I have been as long dead as Euripides? Yet that is the only test. There is certainly no sign of falling off at present, if that is what you are afraid of.

HENDERSON. Would you then, may I ask, rank yourself as a "world dramatist"?

SHAW. No, But I *am* a world dramatist.

HENDERSON. Why?

SHAW. Simply because they play me, with or without my leave, everywhere from London to Japan, both ways round, and at all the intermediate stations. It is a question not of merit but of raw fact. My currency is as universal as that of Sherlock Holmes or Charlie's Aunt or Mary Pickford or Bill Hart or Charlie Chaplin.

HENDERSON. Everyone dabbles in prophecy nowadays—from Wells to Haldane, from Flammarion to Shaw. Take a shot at vaticination—just once more—and tell us what is destined to be the immediate future of the drama!

SHAW *(refusing the bait)*. How the deuce do I know? Have you any reason to suppose that its future will differ from its past? I suppose it will go on dishing up the police and divorce news more or less elegantly for popular consumption, and put up as best it can with the dramatic poets that Providence sends it from time to time.

HENDERSON. I see you intend that it shall put up with you a while longer. And yet—didn't you announce a while ago that in "Back to Methuselah" you had written your last play?

SHAW *(gaily)*. Of course. Until I began "Saint Joan," "Methuselah" *was* my last play. Every play I write is my last play until I begin another. But the play in which the playwright reaches his farthest point is really his last play, even though he may write others that are later in the calendar.

HENDERSON. As always, you are incalculable—even to a mathematician! Will you write any more plays?

SHAW. Will a duck swim? How can I help it?

DIALOGUE III

ENGLAND AND AMERICA: CONTRASTS

PLACE: 10 Adelphi Terrace. Time, spring of 1924. SHAW *and* HENDERSON *are seated in the dining room, where hangs Augustus John's heroic portrait of Shaw.*

HENDERSON. This year the Nobel prize for literature went to your native land—W. B. Yeats; for physics to mine—R. A. Millikan. May I ask if you think British and American genius, in science and the arts, has been adequately recognized by the committee of award of the Nobel prize?

SHAW. I have never studied the list. The committee cannot recognize genius; it can only accept an established reputation and a very safe one—that is to say, an uncontroversial one. As the reputations of the greatest geniuses in literature are always matters of fierce controversy

until they are dead, or at least very old and harmless, the greatest geniuses in literature are out of the running. The prize-winners are like the modest hotels in Baedeker—"well spoken of." Occasionally a man whose art is of international interest, while the controversies in which he has compromised himself are local and transitory, bags the coveted forty thousand dollars and does credit to it. William Butler Yeats, for example! But in most cases, as in Rudyard Kipling's, the committee must accept a reasonably dignified popularity as the safest qualification. But of course the whole conception of prize-giving as applied to the fine arts is absurd. The Nobel business is a lottery open to all who have achieved a minimum of celebrity. As such it is useful as bringing an occasional windfall to an unpaid worker; but that is all that can be said for it!

HENDERSON. It comes to America for science and statesmanship, chiefly; but literature doesn't have a look-in. Had Mark Twain lived, I think the Nobel prize would have gone

to him—for, as I pointed out in a biography of him at the time of his death, Mark Twain was not simply a humorist; he was a sociologist in fiction, whose works are priceless documents for the historian of the future; and above all, a moralist who fought for virtue, integrity, and truth with valiant courage.

SHAW. Yes, Clemens was in very much the same position as myself. He had to put matters in such a way as to make people, who would otherwise hang him, believe he was joking!

HENDERSON *(looking at the Augustus John portrait)*. What a splendid subject Mark Twain would have made for Augustus John! But, after all, I believe you consider that Rodin, in the bronze bust of you in the other room, has discovered the "real" Shaw. That must be why you pointed it out, with the words, "Just as I am, without one plea." Rodin was a towering genius—and a splendid, lovable old fellow to boot. I recall that you presented him with a copy of the Kelmscott Chaucer the day we were here together. Is it true you base your

hope for fame on the fact that your bust was made by Rodin?

SHAW *(grinning)*. Without a doubt. In that very copy of the Kelmscott Chaucer I wrote these lines:

I have seen two masters at work, Morris who made this book,
The other Rodin the Great, who fashioned my head in clay:
I give the book to Rodin, scrawling my name in a nook
Of the shrine their works shall hallow when mine are dust by the way.

I once wrote that at least I was sure of a place in the biographical dictionaries a thousand years hence as: "Shaw, Bernard: subject of a bust by Rodin: otherwise unknown."

HENDERSON *(laughing)*. Posterity will not forget you and Wells; they will be too tickled by your gaudy Utopias—your *Back to Methuselahs* and *Men like Gods* and *Dreams*. What a remarkable fellow, Wells, educator, scientist, man of letters! He gives you the im-

pression of a strong swimmer in the turbulent current of contemporary life— a vital, thrilling part of the element in which he moves. His *Outline of History* made all the professional historians envious because he succeeded in making history at once popular and readable—as readable as fiction, as popular as a best-seller. But what a "howler" he perpetrated about George Washington—that he was a notoriously indolent man!

SHAW *(smilingly reminiscent)*. You and he had it out hammer and tongs—I am not likely to forget it!—in this very room. Washington, I believe, is one of your American divinities—along with Lincoln, Lee, and now Wilson.

HENDERSON. At the time, as it happened, I had just completed a work on Washington, a labor of love and years. I pointed out to Wells that as a matter of perfectly established fact, Washington was a man of extraordinary versatility, determination, and energy—scout, ambassador, traveler, soldier, military commander, ruler, farmer, letter writer, financier, promoter,

etc. Wells obstinately stood to his guns, declaring he meant that, politically, Washington was entirely static; and that even if he was physically energetic, it was waste motion—for he quite unnecessarily rose at four o'clock in the morning and rode over his estate, whereas he would have been far more efficient if he had remained in bed until eight o'clock and let his overseer get up early and ride around the farm! At this delightful *non sequitur*, we all burst into a roar of laughter. And finally Wells confessed that the "howler" would be omitted in the next edition of the *Outline of History*.

Nothing amuses Americans more, for example, than for Arnold Bennett to say that New York's "electric" energy is an illusion, or for Wells to call our eighteenth-century Roosevelt notoriously indolent. Have you found Americans notoriously indolent?

Shaw *(smiling skeptically)*. The human race is notoriously indolent. It is also notoriously industrious. If Wells says that Washington was lazy he is probably right, as he does

not invent his facts. But perhaps all he means is that George did not run around like a mouse in oxygen as the modern American does.

HENDERSON. But, my dear Shaw, compare, for a single example, the hours of labor of the business man in New York and London. The American is at his office at eight-thirty or nine o'clock and remains until five or six, and works straight up till twelve or one o'clock on Saturday. The Briton knocks off work Friday at noon, goes to the country for the week end, and does not return to his office until say eleven o'clock on the following Tuesday. In matters of business, large or small, the American prides himself on quick decisions and speedy results. In England it takes a man at least a week to come to a decision on any subject. Which method, in your opinion, is calculated to produce the best results; the slow, deliberate procedure of the British, or the speed and "hustle" of the American?

SHAW *(quizzically disdainful)*. The slow, deliberate Britisher is as imaginary as the hustl-

ing American. In my youth it was the Yankee who was slow and deliberate and dry and always successful. Mark Twain, you may remember, kept up something of that tradition in his manner. Now the stage American hustles; and the stage Englishman is above business, though his solicitor is occasionally tolerated as a mild humorist. The real Englishman in business comes to grief—when he does come to grief—by taking from Friday to Tuesday off, and being more interested in golf than in his business. The real American comes to grief because he thinks he is hustling along fine when he is only sending unnecessary telegrams and taking unnecessary journeys all day long. Americans have the most elaborate filing systems in the world, but no American can ever find a letter. And every American believes that the postage to every spot on the globe is two cents, thereby levying an enormous tax on the rest of the world in double charges for deficient stamps.

HENDERSON. If we accept your unspoken definition of "hustle" as superfluous and fruit-

less expenditure of energy (a definition I do not for a moment accept), may I ask this further question; Does hustling get you anywhere?

SHAW *(grimly)*. In half-developed countries it may. In England it is useless—the plots are all pre-empted and the berths all occupied. You have to wait until someone dies. It is pathetic to see the newly arrived young American looking with contemptuous amazement at the hopeless Englishmen who will not hustle, quite sure that he will bawl them all out in a week. He soons finds his mistake, poor lad! The German used to beat him hollow at that game in London, because the German was much better taught and disciplined, and was out, not to make money, but to learn how to make money, no matter how hard the work and how small the pay.

HENDERSON. I dare say there is much truth in what you say. In a wonderfully rich and prosperous country like the United States, teeming with natural resources and business opportunities of all sorts, hustling still brings rich

rewards. All Europeans tell me that Americans are spoiled by having too much money to spend —and spending it! Americans are constantly establishing in European markets fictitious standards of value—especially in books, pictures, manuscripts, art objects, and the like—through a surplus of spending capital. The bus drivers of London are now on strike for a weekly wage which is the daily wage of a house-painter or bricklayer in the United States! It still pays to hustle in a country like the United States, which has not yet been fully exploited. I suppose you would admit that Americans *are* hustlers?

SHAW *(surrendering, but at discretion)*. Yes; that is why they never find time to do anything.

HENDERSON. It is a perennial source of amusement to an American to observe the conservatism of Great Britain, fighting sternly the losing battle against the modern improvements, inventions, and innovations of American genius. Central heating systems, adequate bathing

facilities, modern lighting, etc.—what a mighty struggle for victory these inevitable reforms still have to wage against British dread of innovation. At the Whitefriars Club not long ago, when Sir Reginald Blomfield spoke on "The Future of London" and whole-heartedly condemned the American sky-scraper, I was the one person present to speak a word in æsthetic defense of the majestic skyline of New York Harbor and the grand cañon, not of the Yellowstone, but of Wall Street. By the way, what do you think of sky-scrapers—which the French attractively call *frotteurs du ciel?*

Shaw *(laughing heartily)*. A Moorish Marabout once turned me down as an outrageous liar because I tried to describe one to him when he questioned the possibility of such aggregations of population as produce them. The obvious objections to them are that the space occupied by the lifts, which are virtually up-ended streets, must involve enormous rents to make them pay, and that a threat of earthquake or anything else that would cause all their

occupants to rush into the street simultaneously, might pile an ordinary roadway with dead bodies six deep. And what about the sunless cañons they produce? Evidently they should not be arranged in horizontal streets. They should be isolated.

HENDERSON. The question of foundation is of course a very important consideration. It is safe to build sky-scrapers in New York City on a rock foundation with little or no danger of subsidence; but it is a serious question to build sky-scrapers on the marshy foundations of London. Aside from this, do you think sky-scrapers would suit London?

SHAW. Just as well or ill as they would suit any other city equally free from earthquakes. But we set a limit to the height of buildings relatively to the width of the street, and this operates as an isolation law that the builders could not afford to comply with.

HENDERSON. I wonder sometimes that you do not visit the United States. Sooner or later all distinguished foreigners visit our country—

and either lecture us on our shortcomings, give out silly interviews before they have landed, or write even sillier books after they go back home. You ought not to miss what Mencken calls "the greatest show on earth." Of course you've often been invited?

SHAW. About twice a week for the last twenty years. The invitation is always accompanied by an announcement in the American press that I am coming; and the next mail brings me a few million requests for lectures and offers of hospitality.

HENDERSON. Once you said you were afraid to land in New York, dreading arrest and incarceration for doubting the Biblical story of Elisha and the bears. Another time you said you couldn't bear to see the Statue of Liberty, your sense of irony not being able to bear the strain. Still another time—since the World War—you told me that, having delivered over a period of upward of forty years something like two thousand public speeches, for which you had never accepted a single penny

of compensation, you would not at sixty-five care to break the habit of a lifetime—unless the British government literally taxed you out of existence. By the way, why *don't* you visit the United States?

SHAW *(in comic despair)*. Is not Europe enough for one man?

HENDERSON. Now that the Theater Guild is producing your latest plays with so much success, perhaps they want you to come over and produce your plays?

SHAW *(giving America up)*. No. Americans believe that nobody can produce plays but themselves.

HENDERSON. It might be worth your while to visit New York, not merely the financial, but to-day the theatrical and musical center of the world.

SHAW. As "Heartbreak House," "Back to Methuselah," and "Saint Joan" were first performed in New York, the supremacy of the New York theater can hardly be challenged.

HENDERSON. The United States enjoys an-

other theatrical eminence at the present time. While the American stage has as many and as able actors as the British stage, it completely overtops the British stage in the number of its able actresses. I wonder if this is accidental!

SHAW *(questioningly)*. Is it a fact? I have no first-hand knowledge of it. It has been the rule everywhere that actresses are better than actors, because the careers which offer the greatest opportunities to histrionic talent, such as the church, the bar, the political platform, and to a certain extent the army and diplomacy, have been closed to women. The women who, if they had been men, would have been cardinals, king's counselors, demagogues, ambassadors, or *condottiers*, go on the stage, where they are more highly paid than men and enjoy an undisputed equality of opportunity and esteem with them. Except in cases of the Garrick type, where the natural specialization of the actor is overwhelming, the male actor is the refuse of the professions, whereas the leading lady is the pick of them. I should therefore

infer from your statement that the professions are more overcrowded in England than in America, and less accessible or agreeable to women in America than in England.

HENDERSON. I note with interest that in recent years Englishmen—I think of Henderson, Lord Charnwood, and Drinkwater—have been writing biographies and plays dealing with conspicuous American figures: Lee, "Stonewall" Jackson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt. How do you account for this?

SHAW. I suppose we are running short of heroes on this side.

HENDERSON. What were your chief impressions of Drinkwater's play on Lee? I missed the production, but read the printed play. Drinkwater's Lee was a one-sided and limited character, very unlike the lofty figure enshrined in the hearts of all true Americans, irrespective of section.

SHAW. The performance held me from beginning to end, as Drinkwater's plays always do. I could not ask for a better play: if the

facts of history are to be accepted in it. But plays about fairly beaten generals are never completely satisfactory. They can only emphasize the weakness that produced the defeat. Even Masefield could not make Pompey exhilarating.

HENDERSON. Drinkwater makes Lee merely a Virginian, who casts in his lot with the South out of blind loyalty to his native state. A foreigner seeing the play might well imagine that the war between the states was a conflict between Virginia and the North. Lee didn't believe in slavery and didn't wish the Southern States to secede from the Union, but he firmly believed in the constitutional right of secession, which he had been taught at West Point in "Rawle on the Constitution." He was not a tragic hero in the Drinkwater sense, foreseeing from the beginning the South's failure; he was a great soldier who fought to win. His victories—and against heavy odds—were spectacular; and he was fairly beaten in the end, only by overwhelming numbers. I should like

very much to know if to you, an unprejudiced foreign observer, Drinkwater's Lee was the Lee of history?

SHAW. I have not made a study of Lee; and Drinkwater has. I have an impression of Lee, but I don't know where I got it; probably from some portrait. My notion is that Lee was a soldier, with a soldier's limitations, and a soldier's contempt for democratic fancies about individual freedom. Soldiering is the completest slavery possible in civilized society; and as Lee knew this professionally, he could hardly have felt very strongly about the slavery of Sambo. If Lee had been a political genius, he would have hoofed Jefferson Davis out and made himself military dictator of the Confederacy. Drinkwater's play was broken by the historical impossibility of making this the climax of it—the collapse of Lee in the scene with Davis was dramatically unforgivable.

DIALOGUE IV

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

THE dining room at 10 Adelphi Terrace, London. Time, the spring of 1924. Discovered seated at the dinner table, BERNARD SHAW *and* ARCHIBALD HENDERSON.

HENDERSON. The extraordinary material progress of the United States in the past sixty years, since the war between the states, raises the inevitable query as to the artistic and æsthetic developments. What unmistakable contributions to world art—fiction, poetry, drama, *belles lettres*, painting, sculpture, architecture —has my country made, in your opinion?

SHAW. I haven't been there. In the nineteenth century there was only Poe, Whitman, and Mark Twain, with Emerson and James running the intellectual and philosophic side of the business, and Longfellow and Hawthorne and Fenimore Cooper as very good colonials.

From the rest Europe got only its own exports, adulterated and stale and forty years out of date. But my impression is that there is a tremendous germination in progress. The colonial and provincial stages are passing, and the metropolitan stage is coming with a crash. Artistic nature abhors a vacuum, and an artistic vacuum as big as North America must fill itself or wreck the world. Already the situation has changed so far that the Poe-Whitman-Clemens formula I have just given is obviously and ridiculously out of date. Unfortunately, so am I; therefore do not ask me for great contemporary American names. Rather you must tell me of them.

HENDERSON. No! I am just making an experiment, in the effort to discover the impression upon a foreign observer of contemporary American literature. Would you care to compare the best contemporary American and English fiction—for example, Hergesheimer with Galsworthy?

SHAW *(impatiently)*. I tell you I don't

read either; and if I did why should I provoke ill feeling by comparing them?

HENDERSON. Since you don't read American books, I'm afraid my experiment is foredoomed to failure. But—here goes! Surely you know Edith Wharton?

SHAW. I seem to have heard the name, but cannot connect anything with it.

HENDERSON. Willa Cather?

SHAW. Never heard of her—or him.

HENDERSON. James Branch Cabell?

SHAW. Not Cable—no, of course not. Is he a Senator? No; that is Cabot, isn't it? I am afraid I am out of it.

HENDERSON. Sinclair Lewis?

SHAW. Nice chap. I met him with Mary Austin after *Main Street;* and he gave me *Babbitt.*

HENDERSON. Zona Gale?

SHAW. Sorry. No.

HENDERSON. Sherwood Anderson?

SHAW. My mind is a perfect blank.

HENDERSON. Theodore Dreiser?

SHAW. Frank Harris used to talk of him; but I never read him.

HENDERSON. Upton Sinclair?

SHAW. Yes, I know Upton. More power to his elbow! An American Defoe.

HENDERSON. Stuart P. Sherman?

SHAW. I thought he was dead. A general, isn't he?

HENDERSON. Elizabeth Robins?

SHAW. Ah, I loved Elizabeth in the old days when we were fighting the battle of Ibsen. She was most indignant; so I had to be content with reading her books.

HENDERSON. O. Henry?

SHAW. I swallowed six volumes of his stories at a gulp. I have no criticism to make; they are *hors concours*.

HENDERSON. H. L. Mencken?

SHAW. An amusing dog, and a valuable critic, because he thinks it more important to write as he feels than to be liked as a good-hearted gentlemanly creature.

HENDERSON. Eugene O'Neill?

SHAW. I have seen a couple of his plays and read some others. They depend to some extent on false acting. For example, when Jean Cadell played "Diff'rent" in London, and played it so well that she made the woman absolutely real, the result was too painful to be bearable. However, that is true of some very famous plays. Mr. O'Neill's dramatic gift and sense of the stage are unquestionable; but as far as I know his work he is still only a Fantee Shakespeare, peopling his isle with Calibans. I wonder what sort of a job he would make of a civilized comedy like Molière's "Misanthrope."

HENDERSON. My little catalogue—which might fairly have been doubled or trebled—ends here with a bang. Perhaps I would have stood a better chance with Zane Grey, Stewart Edward White, Harold Bell Wright, Gene Stratton Porter, Rex Beach, and James Oliver Curwood. I am told that Hergesheimer has "gone off" distinctly in British favor since the success of *The Three Black Pennys*, that O. Henry sells like the Bible and Shakespeare,

that O'Neill is admired and read, but not actually a stage success in England, that Mencken is read enthusiastically by the limited circle of the *illuminati* and the *intelligentsia*, that Cabell is known only by his *Jurgen*, which was regarded in England as a mildly amusing bit of Rabelaisian humor, and that Sinclair Lewis is regarded as a remarkable writer, his *Main Street* dull, his *Babbitt* a masterly satire of the American business man. The "invasion" of England by American fiction and criticism is so far only a qualified success, although the thin edge of the wedge has certainly gone in. Contemporary American literature of the best type has a doughty and convinced champion in Hugh Walpole, who has repeatedly called attention in British publications to the best contemporary American literature. To sum up the catechism: do you *ever* read any American books?

SHAW. I never read any books—at least hardly any; but I have no prejudice against American books.

HENDERSON. Of course not. And when you do read them, do you find them worth reading?

SHAW *(positively)*. Very few books of any nationality are worth reading. People read to kill time; consequently it is no more objection to a book that it is not worth reading than it is to a pack of cards that it does not pile up treasures in heaven.

HENDERSON. Contemporary fiction seems to be taking a definite turn for the worse. The most revolting novels, filled with the grossest lubricity and most lurid sensuality, are found on every book-stall; and may be bought by your innocent daughter without suspicion. Many such books are lauded to the skies, sell enormously, and are praised as works of genius. Since Zola, and the era of *Nana*, *Thérèse Raquin*, and *La Terre* the public is pretty generally agreed that fiction can no longer be written solely for the *jeune fille*. But it is equally agreed that an author, although animated by a good purpose in telling the truth, may exercise

a demoralizing social influence. I suspect that the influence of Freud and the "Libido" school is at the bottom of much of the trouble. Do you not think this school of thought is exercising a pernicious influence upon contemporary fiction?

SHAW. It is exercising a very tiresome one, because most of the stuff you mean is pseudo-scientific gammon. Even so, I doubt if it does as much harm as romantic gammon.

HENDERSON. That is, as I recall, just what Rebecca West said in a public speech not long ago. If both realistic and romantic fiction are perverting and demoralizing the youth of to-day, are not greater watchfulness on the part of parents and more rigid control on the part of publishers and legal authorities clearly desired? A reaction against the pornographic novel seems already to be setting in. Caradoc Evans' *My People* and D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* were suppressed after publication in England, for example; Victor Marguéritte was penalized —having his Legion of Honor membership

withdrawn, was it not?—for the publication of the book, *La Garçonne*, which has now sold to the number of more than a half million in France; and in very recent years a considerable number of novels have been banned in the United States. Is not a reaction setting in?

SHAW. Why dignify it with a name so pompous as reaction? What has happened is that there has been a great extension of the liberty of the press to deal with the sexual side of human life, followed by a rush to take advantage of it on the part of writers who, like a certain character in one of my plays, have only one subject. But their readers are finding out that crude sex, instead of being the most enthralling literary subject in the world, as they fancied when it was barred, is the dullest. The pleasures connected with it are pleasures to be enjoyed, not to be read about. What fun is there in staring at a young American film actor pretending to kiss Miss Mary Pickford at the happy ending of a movie play? It would no doubt be delightful to kiss Miss Pickford; and

it is always pleasant to look at her when nobody is spoiling the view with his nose. But to watch another person kissing her is as indelicate as it is tantalizing. And how much stupider it is not even to see such things on the screen, but only to read about them in books and know the kisses only by description! The pornographic novel appeals to a want which literature cannot supply. It offers a hungry man a description of a dinner. Even if the descriptions were life-like, they could not satisfy his hunger. But almost all the descriptions seem written by people who are pitifully ignorant of what they are writing about, and they can appeal only to readers equally inexperienced. Compare these novels with *Ivanhoe* or *Pickwick*. It is like comparing minct pies with apple tarts. In short, the pornographic novel is getting found out for the dull thing it is; and that is the long and short of it.

HENDERSON. The moral slump in fiction is probably an inevitable concomitant of the Great War. The long starvation of the sexual

appetite in millions of men sequestered in the trenches, the physical rebound after the mental tension—all this was bound to show itself in fiction.

SHAW. The war has a great deal of demoralization to answer for; but the moral shock of it has left us disposed to take art much more seriously, and humbug less patiently, than before. For instance, I am, and always have been, a conscientious writer; but it is only since the war, which sent up my stocks with a bound, that there has been any general recognition of this.

HENDERSON. Not long ago I was somewhat startled to find one branch of human knowledge entirely closed to future research. A very distinguished novelist, a woman, informed me that nothing new could be said about sex. Yet I suspect the progressive degeneration of the human species is now constantly exhibiting extraordinary specimens and examples of sex manifestations. Strange mixtures of the normal and abnormal, of the elevated and the de-

praved, of the noble and the perverted. These strange new phenomena must be recognized as existent, and their danger squarely faced by physiologists; and they will be painted by novelists whose aim it is, they will claim, to paint, conscientiously, true pictures of human life and society. Do you feel that nothing new can be said about sex in fiction?

SHAW. Utter nonsense. We are only at the beginning of the subject. The old silence prevented us from realizing our own experiences; for it takes a tremendous lot of talking and writing to bring experience into clear intellectual consciousness. It also prevented us from discussing them; in fact we had no decent language to discuss them in. As the silence breaks, and we are forced to think and speak decently because we are thinking and speaking aloud, we are discerning a new world in sex.

HENDERSON. You once described romance as the great heresy which must be swept off from art and life. Married life frequently brings the most shocking sex-disillusionment to

romance-fed young girls. Such pictures have been drawn by De Maupassant in *Une Vie*, by Tolstoy in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, for example. Sex in romance—so far as it goes—has doubtless been worn threadbare. Did you see a recent cartoon, in *Punch* perhaps, showing a typical British dowager in the act of purchasing a novel? "Are you sure it has no sex in it?" she anxiously inquired of the salesman. "Ah! quite sure," he blandly replies; "it is only a love story." Despite the beginning made by Maupassant and Tolstoy, it seems to me that the influence of sex in married life still awaits adequate treatment.

SHAW. There is never any real sex in romance. What is more, there is very little, and that of a very crude kind, in ninety-nine hundredths of our married life. The field of sexual selection is too narrowed by class and property divisions which forbid intermarriage to give anything like enough material for a genuine science of sex. I tell you you will never have a healthily sexed literature until you have a

healthily sexed people; and that is impossible under Capitalism, which imposes commercial conditions on marriage as on everything else.

HENDERSON. No true literary artist or critic deplores frankness in fiction, provided the author expresses himself or herself tactfully and decently. But overt pruriency in fiction and autobiography is becoming a menace to public morals and the welfare of society. Great art, clean treatment, and worthy purpose justify and sanction the frankness of *Salammbo*, *Madam Bovary*, *Tom Jones*, *Sappho*, *Thaïs*, *Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Aphrodite*, for example. But the time has come, today, I believe, for responsible critics to sound a warning against overt pruriency in current literature.

SHAW. Goodness gracious! Have the prudes, male and female, ever stopped warning us against it? You cannot define the terms. One man's poetry is another man's pruriency. One woman's passion is another woman's impropriety. For goodness' sake let people have what they want. Read Sterne's *Sentimental*

Journey. If that is not prurient, the word has no meaning. Well, are you going to warn people against *A Sentimental Journey*? When I read it—I was a boy at the time—I liked it. I conclude that I liked pruriency when it was well done. It has never occurred to me to try to prevent anyone else reading it. You must let people eat what agrees with them, even if it seems to you to be garbage.

HENDERSON. One of the great difficulties in this whole, very complicated question is the confused state of the public mind, and the difficulty of defining the terms. For example, people speak glibly of the sex novel—without taking the trouble to find out what they mean by the term. What is a sex novel, if you please?

SHAW. I never used the expression. Why challenge me to define it? I suppose you might call *Manon Lescaut* a sex novel just as you might call *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* a sea novel. If you called Wagner's "Tristan" a sex opera or "Romeo and Juliet" a sex tragedy

I should know what you meant, whereas if you called *Dombey and Son* or "Macbeth" sex stories I should conclude that you were mad. But the term taken by itself as a category conveys nothing.

HENDERSON. I dare say most people mean pornographic novel when they say sex novel. Strindberg's "Countess Julie" might be termed a sex play, Dumas fils's "L'Affaire Clemenceau" a pornographic play; France's *Le Lys Rouge* a sex novel, Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* a pornographic novel. How would you put the matter?

SHAW. A pornographic novelist is one who exploits the sexual instinct as a prostitute does. A legitimate sex novel elucidates it or brings out its poetry, tragedy, or comedy. But there is really no critical sense in such an expression as sex novel. The Victorian novel, which was sexless to the extent that Thackeray could not describe the sexual adventures of Pendennis as Fielding described those of Tom Jones, certainly did prove that the novel which says no

more about sex than may be said in a lecture on the facts to a class of schoolgirls of fifteen can be enormously more entertaining than a novel wholly preoccupied with sexual symptoms. But readers of *Don Quixote* knew that already; and eight or more generations of readers had found *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pilgrim's Progress* more readable than *Moll Flanders*. It is the sexless novel that should be distinguished; the sex novel is normal. Don't, by the way, think that all Victorian novels were sexless. Ouida scandalized the Victorians just as much as the people you are thinking of are scandalizing the Georgians. Grant Allen was boycotted for a couple of years for *The Woman Who Did*, which reeked with the Puritanism of his North of Ireland ancestry. George Moore's *Mummer's Wife* was a Victorian novel. Zola's works, and De Maupassant's, were translated and prodigiously discussed in Victoria's reign. They were all considered the limit then. Who fusses about them now?

HENDERSON. Surely there must be some-

thing indecent, and shameful about a good many novels appearing to-day. I heard a distinguished Englishman, an able critic, say only the other day that a popular novel by an author bearing the name of a great scientist was the nastiest book he had ever read. Mr. Clement Shorter's review of *The Rainbow* in *The Sphere*, if I am not mistaken, was the proximate cause of its suppression. It outrages one to read highly favorable reviews of *La Garçonne* in the English translation, *The Bachelor Girl*, which is bowdlerized out of all resemblance to the offensive original. *Ulysses* was banned when it appeared serially in the United States, as I recall; and any bookseller in England or America, I judge, would sell it over the counter only at the risk of instant prosecution. Proust's great novel, *Á la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, is appearing in English translation; but I suspect that a halt will be called at *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, since from the standpoint of public morals the subjects dealt with, which are treated with great freedom and liberality of

view, are *res tacenda* in polite society. What is your view of the treatment of sex in the contemporary novel?

SHAW. I don't read the contemporary novel. There is no such thing as the contemporary novel. Name your novel; and I may tell you what I think of it— that is, if I have read it, which is in the last degree improbable, as a playwright has no patience with novels. But in the few that I *have* read there is no treatment of sex common to them all and yet peculiar to the present period.

HENDERSON. I leave out of discussion the novel *La Garçonne* which you say you haven't read. I name *Ulysses*, a work of genius. The Shakespeare *pastiche*, the blasphemous "Brocken" episode, and Mrs. Bloom's ruminations (despite the slime)—are memorable pieces of writing. But Joyce takes us into the sewers; lingers over the open drains and fetid cesspools. To read *Ulysses* is a remarkable and scarifying experience; but the fact that it is "not fit to print," according to Anglo-Saxon

standards of public decency, indicates that Joyce has overstepped the bounds.

Shaw. When they asked me to pay three guineas for *Ulysses* I said I would not go a penny beyond seven and sixpence. I read scraps of it in *The Little Review*, not knowing that they all belonged to the history of a single day in Dublin. I was attracted to it by the fact that I was once a young man in Dublin, and also by Joyce's literary power, which is of classic quality. I do not see why there should be any limit to frankness in sex revelation; but Joyce does not raise that question. The question he does raise is whether there should be any limit to the use in literature of blackguardly language. It depends on what people will stand. If Dickens or Thackeray had been told that a respectable author like myself would use the expletive "bloody" in a play, and that an unexceptionally fastidious actress of the first rank, associated exclusively with fine parts, would utter it on the stage without turning a hair, he could not have believed it. Yet I am

so old-fashioned and squeamish that I was horrified when I first heard a lady describe a man as a rotter.

I could not write the words Mr. Joyce uses: my prudish hand would refuse to form the letters; and I can find no interest in his infantile clinical incontinences, or in the flatulations which he thinks worth mentioning. But if they were worth mentioning I should not object to mentioning them, though, as you see, I should dress up his popular locutions in a little Latinity. For all we know they may be peppered all over the pages of the lady novelists of ten years hence; and Frank Harris's autobiography may be on all the book-stalls. When Linnæus first wrote on the fertilization of plants, botany was denounced as corrupting to morals. That seems hardly credible now. But in point of genuine frankness there has been no advance upon Rousseau. Mr. Harris does not really give himself away as completely as St. Augustine or Bunyan.

HENDERSON. The old defense of the "nat-

uralists" in Zola's day was the truthfulness of the portrayal. The plea was always advanced that the whole truth must be told, if art was to be a graphic picture of human life. Zola vigorously defended his treatment in *Thérèse Raquin*, making good to the hilt his contention that his treatment was scientific in its accuracy, and studiously non-pornographic. *La Terre* positively reeks with references to sexual intercourse; but the book is not offensive, because no base appeal is made to the senses. *Naña* is a photographic study of the French courtesan —affecting, amusing, shocking, horrible; but it contains a minimum of the actual argot of the *poule*, of the language of the *Maison de passe*. *Ulysses*, however, is full of nasty words, reeking with sensual images. Can language about bodily functions not discussed in public be in the interest of public morals?

Shaw *(decisively)*. Is any treatment of sex in the interest of public morals? Most of the people who denounce *Ulysses* would say no if they would think out their own position;

and that answer would at once reduce them to absurdity. *Ulysses* is a document, the outcome of a passion for documentation that is as fundamental as the artistic passion—more so, in fact; for the document is the root and stem of which the artistic fancy works are the flowers. Joyce is driven by his documentary *daimon* to place on record the working of a young man's imagination for a single day in the environment of Dublin. The question is, is the document authentic? If I, having read some scraps of it, reply that I am afraid it is, then you may rise up and demand that Dublin be razed to the ground and its foundations sown with salt. And I may say do so by all means. But that does not invalidate the document.

The Dublin "jackeens" of my day, the medical students, the young bloods about town, were very like that. Their conversation was dirty; and it defiled their sexuality which might just as surely have been presented to them as poetic and vital. I should like to organize the young men of Dublin into clubs for the purpose of

reading *Ulysses*, so that they should debate the question "Are we like that?" and if the vote was in the affirmative, proceed to the further question: "Shall we remain like that?" which would, I hope, be answered in the negative. You cannot carry out moral sanitation any more than physical sanitation, without indecent exposures. Get rid of the ribaldry that Joyce describes and dramatises, and you get rid of *Ulysses;* it will have no more interest on that side of it than a twelfth-century map of the world has to-day. Suppress the book and have the ribaldry unexposed; and you are protecting dirt instead of protecting morals. If a man holds up a mirror to your nature and shows you that it needs washing—not whitewashing—it is no use breaking the mirror. Go for soap and water.

HENDERSON. Superbly answered. But I am unconvinced. The genius of *Ulysses* is unquestioned; and Joyce has made a permanent contribution to world literature. But it is, as you intimate, more a sociological document than

a novel. It is a masterpiece *manqué*—a magnificent failure. Literature has been enriched by its high art (in spots); but public decency will rightly continue to ban it from public book-stalls in Anglo-Saxon countries. Literature for all—for the masses—for the public—will always have to conform, as requirement conditional to publication, to a certain standard of decency. And unless Anglo-Saxon society registers a sex degeneration not now indicated (what a terrific retort you yourself made to Nordau!), the standard of literary decency, which follows roughly the social standard, will maintain a respectable level.

Abandoning art and morals for science, I am just back from Berlin, where I had the pleasure of friendly personal and professional intercourse with Professor Albert Einstein. He laughed heartily when I told him you had remarked to me that he looked much more like a musician than a mathematician. He is very fond of music, being a finished violinist himself, and assured me that the creative mathema-

tician was always an artist, with a highly developed sense of form. Places of honor on his walls are held by three great English scientists —Newton, Faraday, and Clerk-Maxwell. In England and the United States, Einstein is held in especial respect by the public, who entertain the notion that Einstein has displaced Newton, the greatest mathematician ever produced by the Anglo-Saxon race. May I ask if you have imbibed the idea that Einstein has ditched Newton?

SHAW. He has certainly succeeded in shattering the pretension of the Newtonians and Copernicans to infallibility. I hope we shall soon hear the last of the millions of light years, and the Betelgeuses as big as half a dozen universes, and all the rest of the monstrous exaggerations and fairy tales founded on obviously ridiculous methods of measuring interstellar distances and stellar sizes. A man's sense of humor should be sufficient to prevent him from believing that our neighbor, the sun, so close to us that a cloud between us can make the dif-

G. B. S. DISCUSSES RELATIVITY WITH HIS BIOGRAPHER

Cartoon by Bohun Lynch

ference between a hot day and a cold one, is 93,000,000 miles off, or even 93,000. I have no patience with such follies.

HENDERSON. As to that, my dear G. B. S., I am afraid I shall have to refer you to Professor Harlow Shapley or to Sir Frank Dyson. What a symposium we once had at this table —Wells was in fine form that day—over Relativity, atoms, electrons; Einstein, Rutherford, Bohr, Russell, Planck! Wells mentioned that, in some articles he had published in the *Fortnightly Review*, he had anticipated Einstein in some respects. Ever since that day I have wanted to have a definite expression from you on the subject of Relativity.

SHAW *(with animation)*. Up to a certain point I was astounded to learn that anybody regarded it as a discovery, as I had never been an Absolutist in physics, and never supposed that anyone else was. Also I was naturally tickled by the Michelson experiment as a fresh instance of the vanity of Baconianism. No; I do not mean the theory that Bacon wrote Shake-

speare's plays; I mean the notion that our professional men of science accept the experimental test. *Prima facie* the result of that experiment knocked half the science of the last two hundred years into a cocked hat. Usually this result is avoided by cooking the experiment to fit the theory. On this occasion they cooked the theory to fit the experiment. They always do either the one or the other. As to accepting it without question as they would have accepted it, if it had shown, as they expected, that the ray that traveled along the earth's orbit did its sprint in less time than the ray that crossed it, they never even thought of allowing themselves to be upset in such a fashion. Yet when literary men like H. G. Wells and myself tell them that experiments are put-up jobs and can prove nothing, they are scandalized and invoke Bacon. This was a flagrant case, because the Michelson experiment was not an experiment at all, but a measurement. But they swallowed the discrepancy just as they had swallowed the discrepancy in the perihelion of Mercury. Later on

I found that Einstein might be described more accurately as the confuter of Relativity than as its discoverer. His mathematics were not intelligible to me, as I am not familiar with that sort of shorthand. Some day I shall have to do for Einstein what I did for Jevons nearly forty years ago, when I—

Just here Mr. Shaw *was called to the telephone, and the thread of his discourse is forever lost.*

DIALOGUE V

THE GREAT WAR AND THE AFTERMATH

A COUNTRY house near Ayot St. Lawrence in Hertfordshire. Time, the spring of 1924. SHAW *and* HENDERSON *are seated upon the porch which overlooks the garden. It is a quiet, peaceful Sunday afternoon; the doves are cooing softly overhead. The conversation opens with a bang.*

HENDERSON. My dear Shaw, our relations with each other have always been thoroughly unceremonious. Our friendship has enabled us to be outrageously frank with each other. During my present visit to England, some extraordinary statements have been made in my hearing regarding your position, your "patriotism," during the world cataclysm which—here in this quiet spot on this peaceful Sunday—seems so remote and unreal. I remem-

ber you once said you had to jibe at England because that is the classical English way to make her sit up. But is there not some classical phrase—*dulce et decorum*—it is grand and gorgeous, during a war, to die (intellectually) for one's country? I understand, however, that with extraordinary perversity you characteristically refused to stop thinking while the war was in progress. A highly treasonable procedure! To put the query mildly but bluntly, may I ask to what extent you supported the British Government during the World War?

SHAW *(amused, but very earnest in his reply).* I could do very little, because my weapon is the pen; and the pen cannot keep pace with war. The first thing I did was to throw all my work aside and spend two months studying the situation and its history before I launched *Common Sense About the War.* I had to find some sort of answer to the question, What else could the Kaiser have done but what he did, hemmed in as he was? Nobody else made an attempt to face that question; every-

body was writing frantically without any study or knowledge of the situation, or of history, or of war, or diplomacy, or human nature, or anything else that was indispensable even to war sanity, which is much madder than peace sanity.

Wilhelm should have left his western frontiers absolutely open, confiding them publicly to the honor of France, England, and America, whilst he, representing the most civilized state in the world, met the attack of the abominable Czardom in the east. Public opinion in the west would then have been on his side; it would have been impossible for England or America, and dangerous for France, to stab him in the back. But the card was a big one which only a big democratically trained man could have played. Emperors cannot do such things. Yet Wilhelm went so far as to sound Grey on the subject; but Grey did not mean to encourage his prey to escape him in that fashion. So Wilhelm made his dash to get to Paris in a fortnight, and, being wretchedly unprepared—no

big guns ready for Liège—missed his spring and was doomed.

However, to return to your question, it may interest you to know that I wrote a great deal more than *Common Sense*, but I always found that by the time I had found out the facts and the right thing to say about them the situation had changed and it was too late. When once a war breaks out there is nothing to do but fight. Even the generals can hardly think a kilometer ahead of the front line. The great strategies are invented for them afterward by the historians. My opportunity was eighteen months before the war, when I showed how it might have been averted. I cannot help governments if they will not listen to me, or have not the strength of mind to act on my very mild suggestions.

HENDERSON. I feel, somehow, that you have evaded my question. May I put it this way? To what extent did you attack the Government during the war?

SHAW. I protest I did not attack it at all,

though everyone else did, especially the hyper-patriots. But I know what you are driving at. I was fiercely determined, like Ramsay Macdonald, that the diplomatists and militarists who brought about the war should not get credit for having saved the world from the peril which they had in fact created. They were pretending—or allowing greenhorns and journalists to pretend for them—that the war was a war to end war, an act of pure defense against an unprovoked attack by Germany, a crusade against tyranny, oppression, imperialism, and foreign domination led by a peaceful, unambitious, unaggressive, idyllic England; and in that faith many gallant young men enlisted, fought and died.

If that pretense had not been exposed, the victory would have established reactionary government in England for fifty years instead of for five. I did all I safely could to expose it, and to make the country understand that it was fighting for its life to escape the ruin its militarist governing class had brought upon it,

and that, having no moral case against the Germans (all the parties were equally guilty) it must keep its powder dry for a military success.

But I could not say very much; the danger of discouraging enlistment during the voluntary period, and of weakening the national morale, was too serious. I did not let myself go until the war was over, during the election of 1918, when I had a great oratorical campaign. After a speech of mine at Stourbridge, in support of the late Mary McArthur, a soldier said to me: "If I had known all that in 1914, they would never have got khaki on *my* back." My reply was: "That is precisely why I did not tell you in 1914."

HENDERSON. Years ago, when you were fighting the battle for Ibsen, and trying to make Pinero come your way, I remember that Mr. William Archer wanted you guillotined in Trafalgar Square. To-day, choosing a milder form of punishment, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones wishes twenty pairs of stocks put up in Trafal-

gar Square for a "lot of Englishmen who hate England and write nasty things and say nasty things about our country, and do all they can to make our own people hate her and to make other countries hate her." I am afraid you and Wells are first among Mr. Jones's selections for this condign punishment. Probably the author of *The Great Stupidity* would rate *Common Sense About the War* as worse than a crime: a blunder. What you called "common sense" other Englishmen called everything from "impish slanders" to "false weights." The storms of passion have subsided; and "now it can be told," I suppose. What effect, if you please, did *Common Sense About the War* produce in England?

Shaw. None, beyond giving some relief and satisfaction to the people who were bursting with impatience at the reckless folly, spite, and ignorant romance and mendacity that were being stuffed down their throats by the press, and by the fussy bores who found that they could get listened to and make themselves im-

portant by what they imagined to be patriotism. I had to get cards printed to acknowledge the resolutions that were passed all over the country thanking me. The sale, I think, was 75,000 copies.

HENDERSON. The matter took another aspect in the United States. You were charged with "turning the currents of doubtful uninformed American opinion into channels of virulent suspicion and active hostility against the most righteous cause for which men have bled," with "serving the adversaries of England when they sought to blind the American people to the plain clear issues of the conflict," with helping to "delay the entry of America into the field," and thus helping to "prolong the long, long years of Europe's agony." For instance, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, who was in the United States through the early months of the war until July, 1915, said in the English edition of *My dear Wells:* "I witnessed it, I watched as many of them [Americans], crediting you [Shaw] with veracity as a man and

with knowledge as a student of affairs, weighed your distorted evidence, and gave their verdict against this country—." As the public has not yet heard your side in this matter, I should like to have your impressions regarding the effect which *Common Sense About the War* produced in the United States.

SHAW *(eagerly and earnestly)*. That was a different story, thanks to the carelessness of the New York *Times*. It ought to have been plain to a child of three that in any newspaper friendly to the Allies, *Common Sense* should either have been published all in one piece or not published at all. It was designed very largely for American consumption; and it began by a complete disclaimer of all the pretexts for the war which the Germans could and did prove to be invalid, and which must have seemed in America merely hypocritical. I made the Germans a handsome present of all the rubbish about our disinterestedness, our unpreparedness, our respect for treaties and for the sacredness of neutral soils, and all the rest of our

recruiting propaganda and Jingo tosh, which naturally did not impose on anybody but ourselves. Then I gave the real reason why German Imperialism had to be smashed. To allow it to triumph would, I said, be "to shut the gates of mercy on mankind."

The New York *Times* published the first half, and left it "to be continued in our next" a month later [1] without a hint of the nature of the sequel. Of course America took the first half to be a pro-German manifesto, and never read the second half. I could do nothing; it had not occurred to me that such a blunder was possible. I concluded that the New York *Times* was indifferent about the war, but bent on scoring English hypocrisy. But I suppose it was the old story. I am praised for my power of making people think; but my real power seems to be that of depriving them of all their mental faculties. No doubt I paralyzed the New York *Times* that way.

[1] Mr. Shaw is in error. *Common Sense About the War* was published in three installments in the New York *Times* at intervals of one week.—A. H.

At all events, if the paper had felt as we felt here it would never have turned my guns on us as it did. I still find Americans, and Englishmen who were in America at the time—Henry Arthur Jones for example—under the impression that I was what the French called a Defeatist. It was lucky for me that the British Government knew better, or I should have been shot.

HENDERSON. A remarkable article by an American professor of history has recently appeared in *Current History*, absolving Germany from the charge of being the chief aggressor in precipitating the war. The perspective of history begins to shift rapidly after the passions of war have begun to subside. After all, the only question to be settled is: Were you right in *Common Sense About the War?* Have you been justified by events?

SHAW *(with animation and triumph)*. Completely, even where I had been guessing. Within a few months of its publication the *Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* were going far beyond

anything I had ventured to say. Great offense had been given by my contemptuous dismissal of the pretense that we had not been prepared for the war—that we were innocent lambs suddenly and wantonly attacked by a German wolf who had been preparing for years. The silly people who were spreading this sentimental fairy tale forgot that they were accusing the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office of gross blindness and neglect of duty. Lord Haldane hastened to explain that General French had been sent to study the country in Flanders years before the war broke out, and claimed rightly that the War Office had fulfilled to the letter the military arrangements it had made with France and Belgium in view of the war as early as 1906. Mr. Winston Churchill claimed that the British navy had gone into the war with five years' accumulation of ammunition made expressly for it. Lord Fisher's autobiography revealed the pressure put on the British Government to attack and destroy the German fleet—to "Copenhagen"

it— without notice in the days of Edward VII, who had finally to ask Fisher to be good enough to stop shaking his fist in the royal face.

Anyone now reading *Common Sense* will be astonished at the severity of the censorship I imposed on myself when all the hyperpatriotic publicists were raving in utter recklessness of the effect their transports might produce on foreign opinion, especially on American opinion. American opinion, as the event proved, was all-important to us; yet at a moment when the highway robbery of American ships which we were practicing in the Mediterranean as part of our command-of-the-sea tradition was threatening to drive America into the war against us, one of our ultra-Jingo dailies actually threatened the United States with a declaration of war. Luckily for us, the Germans were pirating in the Baltic as merrily as we were between the Pillars of Hercules; and the Admiralty soon came to its senses and agreed to pay for what it seized; so that horror was averted. But from first to last our fervid

patriots disgusted foreign opinion, created mistrust and panic at home, and drove our best public men out of office with a reckless indifference to everything but the gratification of their own passions, which was of enormous assistance to the enemy, and must have cost indirectly the lives of thousands of our soldiers. If ever you go to war again, shoot all your red-hot patriots first thing.

HENDERSON. I seem to recall a violent outburst of popular feeling aroused by one of your speeches following the sinking of the *Lusitania?*

SHAW. The violent outburst was against the sinking of the *Lusitania*, not against me. I did not conceal my contempt for the people who had taken the frightful slaughter of our soldiers in Flanders as if it were a cinema show got up to please their patriotism, but who went stark raving mad when one of their favorite pleasure boats—actually with first-class passengers on board—was blown up. But they were too mad to mind me. The truth is that the *Lusitania* catastrophe—much too big a word

for it, by the way—was the first incident in the war that was small enough for their minds to take in: they suddenly realized at last that the Germans meant to kill them, and that the war was something more serious than reading dispatches from correspondents at the front about "our gallant fellows in the trenches." Their frivolity infuriated me; but no newspaper dared rebuke their silly heartlessness as it deserved; and I did not tell them off until the war was over, in the preface to "Heartbreak House." Besides, I was not troubling much about them, with the prospect suddenly opened up of America having to come in. Like von Bernhardi I knew that America held the winning card.

HENDERSON. If I am not very much mistaken, investigation has since proved the original contention of the Germans, so strenuously denied in the United States at the time, that the *Lusitania* carried munitions of war.

SHAW *(smiling)*. Yes; but what difference does that make? It was the business of the

Germans to sink every vessel that could carry munitions and food to the British islands, whether they were actually carrying them or not. Sentimental people, who will not face the fact that the business of war is killing, imagined that if a ship hung out a red cross and called itself a hospital ship, or if it carried saloon passengers and sang, "Yes, we have no munitions," it must not be torpedoed. A ship is a ship; and if it is let slip because it is carrying wounded men this time, it will carry sound soldiers next time. A blockade that is not utterly ruthless is no blockade at all; the net must have no holes in it. It was blockade against blockade, and ours won; but we had a very narrow shave of being starved by the submarines. The most horrible part of the business was that we kept up the blockade after the enemy had surrendered.

HENDERSON. One of the most singular of the charges brought against you is that in some weird way you encouraged the Moorish tribes in revolt against France, and so succeeded in

holding French troops in Africa at a moment when they were most desperately needed on the Aisne. In this alleged incident your name was coupled with that of the English novelist, Mr. A. E. W. Mason. Let me put the question: Did you, at the instance of Mason, draft a remarkable letter to the Moors, when the Germans tried to induce them to revolt against French rule in the middle of the war?

SHAW *(guardedly)*. I do not propose to give away such secret service as Mason undertook during the war. You must ask him about it. Mason was one of a number of men of letters who, being long past military age when the war came, postdated their births recklessly and dyed their hair when that was necessary to support the fiction. C. E. Montague, for instance, who was never content except when under fire or trying to break his neck on the mountains, could not procure any hair dye in the trenches, with the result that "his hair turned white (comparatively) in a single night." Mason did all sorts of things as an intelligence officer

in the Mediterranean district, sometimes under the Admiralty, sometimes under the War Office. He started service in 1914 at twenty-two, which was pretty good considering that he ran away to the stage as a boy, and played for me as a full-grown and very good-looking young man in "Arms and the Man" in 1894. When the Germans told the Moors that I was a great prophet and that I had told Senator Beveridge that they were blameless in the matter of Belgium, Mason got on their track and told me I must play up. Accordingly, we produced an "Epistle to the Moors," in a style founded on the New Testament, the Koran, and Captain Burton's translation of the *Arabian Nights*, which was much more to the point than chatter about Belgium. What did the Moors care about Belgium? We convinced them that they had better keep quiet. However, I must protest that the advice we gave them was perfectly sound from their own point of view. We did not grind our ax at their expense.

HENDERSON *(grinning)*. That "Epistle to

the Moors" must be unearthed. From what you say, it was more than a "mere scrap of paper." Europe has been in an awful mess since the war; and from time to time some "responsible party" voices the belief that the Germans should have been "licked to a frazzle," to the end that the economic stagnation of Europe, the occupation of the Ruhr, the recalcitrancy of the Germans in the matter of reparations and indemnities, might have been obviated. What is your opinion? Would the world to-day be better off if the war had been prolonged and the Allies had dictated a peace from Berlin?

SHAW *(emphatically)*. Good Lord, no! Look at the peace they dictated from Versailles. That was bad enough in all conscience. What more could they have done if they had gone to Berlin but annex Germany? That, if it could have worked at all, might have been better for the Germans, as the motive for plunder would have been broken. From the point of view of those who regard the collapse of the central empires

and the Tsardom as a misfortune—that is, from the point of view of the militarist governing classes—it was a disastrous mistake not to have taken Lord Lansdowne's advice and come to terms with Germany a year sooner. But Lord Robert Cecil countered Lord Lansdowne by raising the alarm of "a Peace Offensive," and the Bitter Enders had their way. You may have noticed that Lord Lansdowne is never mentioned now. That is because he was right when all his party were wrong. Unpardonable!

HENDERSON. Since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, a ceaseless international debate has been in progress regarding the peace. Some wit has observed that in future nations will hesitate long before going to war, through dread of the ensuing peace. Is the world today "safe for democracy"? In a word, do you think that, on the whole, the effects of the war have been beneficial to mankind?

SHAW *(countering)*. Do *you* think the effects of the San Francisco earthquake have been ben-

eficial to California as a whole? It demonstrated the stability of steel-framed skyscrapers and shook down great numbers of rotten and unsanitary buildings, besides removing many people who have not been perceptibly missed. Well, the war shook down the Tsardom, an unspeakable abomination, and made an end of the new German Empire and the old Apostolic Austrian one. It settled the Irish question; it gave votes and seats in Parliament to women; and it gave prohibition its dead lift over the final obstacles in your country. It is conceivable that another war, if frightful enough, might even reform our spelling. But if society can be reformed only by the accidental results of horrible catastrophes—if these results are the precise opposite of what was intended by those who brought about the catastrophe—what hope is there for mankind in them? The war was a horror; and everybody is the worse for it except the people who were so narrowly selfish that even a war improved them.

HENDERSON. One of your bitterest oppo-

nents since the war—a friend of other days—has been calling you a lot of awful names: "most poisonous of all the poisonous haters of England; despiser, distorter and denier of the plain truths whereby men live; topsy-turvy perverter of all human relationships; menace to ordered social thought and ordered social life; irresponsible braggart, blaring self-trumpeter; idol of opaque intellectuals and thwarted females; calculus of contrariwise; flibberty-gibbet pope of chaos; portent and epitome of this generation's moral and spiritual disorder"—and then some. Whew! One of the many counts in the indictment, I believe, is that you were said to be "one of Germany's best propagandists during the war." Is it true, may I inquire, that the Germans (government, press, and writers) used your pronouncements regarding the absurdity of Great Britain's making war because Belgian neutrality was violated, for Germany propagandist purposes?

Shaw. It was not an absurdity. You must distinguish. For three hundred years and

more it has been a fixed principle in British diplomacy that no military power of any magnitude should occupy the continental shores of the North Sea. Belgium was created as a minor state—a buffer state—to stand between France and Germany and the sea. Whenever Antwerp was touched by a first-rate power, England's guns went off. Whether it was Louis XVI or the French Revolution or the German Empire did not matter: England at once allied herself with the enemies of the invader of the Low Countries and smashed him. This was perfectly straightforward balance-of-power diplomacy; and when the German Empire invaded Belgium, the British expeditionary force, with all its alliances ready in its pocket, including an arrangement with the ostensibly neutral Belgians, flew at it. Therefore it is true that the invasion of Belgium by Germany was the provocation on which England declared war, having prepared for this contingency since 1906.

But as balance-of-power diplomacy was

neither popular with nor indeed comprehensible by the man in the street (who was presently to be the man in the trenches), it was camouflaged with a mass of nonsense about our disinterestedness, our unpreparedness, the sacredness of neutrality and of a long-extinct treaty and all the rest of it. This went down in America until the Germans occupied Brussels and found all the records of our secret military arrangements with the Belgians. They blew the gaff by circulating facsimiles of the documents on an enormous scale. I guessed that this would happen and set to work to disclaim the camouflage to the Americans I met, and to set our case on a genuine footing. Senator Beveridge gave the publicity I desired to my disclaimer; and of course the Germans eagerly quoted me to show that the moral case against them was a trumped-up one, which it was. But they made very little effective play with it, because their intelligence service was remarkably unintelligent—nothing like so cunning as ours. Wilhelm's way was not successful in getting effi-

cient service; it tended to the Survival of the Snobbiest instead of the ablest.

HENDERSON. There is just one more garbled story I want to ask you about—since it is wholly "out of character." Since one's attitude toward Belgium and the Belgians is a sort of touchstone of character nowadays, I want your answer to this question: Did you decline to write a chapter for a patriotic volume, contributed to by distinguished Britons and edited by Sir Hall Caine?

SHAW. On the contrary, I wrote the chapter; but the book, which was called King Albert's Birthday Book or something of the kind, and was to help the Belgians in their first desperate destitution in 1914, was issued by the *Daily Telegraph*. Now the *Daily Telegraph* is the favorite paper of the English middle classes, and therefore politically very timid, and always twenty-five years behind the time. Long after Wagner and Ibsen had completed their conquest of Europe and were famous old men, the *Daily Telegraph* was still assuring its readers

that Wagner's music had no melody and was the cacophony of a self-advertising character, and that Ibsen was a blackguard who ought to be prosecuted for obscenity. All the other great dailies can show contributions of mine in their back numbers, in their biggest type. To the *Daily Telegraph* I am still a wicked and dreadful man. Apart from mere theatrical news, it will not dare to say a civil word of me until it no longer dares to say an uncivil one.

Fancy its feelings when Hall Caine, in the very middle of the sensation caused by my *Common Sense About the War*, calmly proposed to put an article by me into its King Albert book. It trembled from head to foot, and finally nerved itself to refuse. Hall Caine, having asked me for the article and not being a man who runs away from his guns, immediately proposed to resign his editorship; but I dissuaded him by pointing out that it was the Belgians and not the *Daily Telegraph* who

would suffer, and that it did not matter a rap to me whether my article went in or not.

Fortunately at that moment the Belgians themselves, through Count Lalaing, came to me and asked me to write their own direct appeal to the world, with their eyes especially on America. They knew that I could be trusted to put their case fairly and seriously instead of merely using Belgium as a brick to throw at Germany. I wrote such a moving appeal for them that when I read it over in proof I found that consistency obliged me to send in a substantial subscription myself. This put the laugh so completely against the *Telegraph* and with Hall Caine that the affair ended quietly with Hall Caine and myself chuckling, and the *Daily Telegraph* relieved from the horrible dilemma of having either to quarrel with the best beloved writer of the day or be publicly connected with an apostle of Ibsen and Wagner.

I may say once for all that on every occasion —and there were three or four—when I was asked to do a literary job to help the authorities

during the war I did it to the entire satisfaction of those who asked me. But of this the fervid patriots who were always volunteering the most mischievous interferences had no suspicion. They never doubted that the authorities were as foolish and ignorant as themselves.

HENDERSON. During my recent visit to Germany, I was struck by the marked respect and deference shown toward Americans. The German people generally felt confidence in the ability and fairness of General Dawes, in the integrity of the financial experts—Americans and those of other nationalities—associated with him. The ultimate acceptance by the German government of the fundamentals of the Dawes Report is now clearly forecast. May I ask your opinion of the value of an economic board (group of financial experts) as a means of solving the Ruhr problem?

SHAW. Financial experts mean bankers and commercial financiers, who never understand finance. They deal in capital and credit, which are phantom categories, useful only in commer-

cial accountancy. The first thing a statesman has to learn is that there is nothing concrete and available in existence corresponding to capital and credit. You cannot eat them, drink them, wear them, build with them, or fight with them. Consequently you must keep experts off your economic board. It may be more difficult to find statesmen to put on it; but really it is safer to have men who know nothing of a subject than people who know it thoroughly but know it all wrong. Almost all commercial experience is to the bad in affairs of state. Our experts have a very simple plan to produce prosperity, which is to double our capital by inflating our unconvertible paper currency by a hundred per cent. The Germans found this a very convenient way of paying the war indemnities exacted from them. For instance, they owed me money for author's fees, and I had a handsome balance in the bank in Berlin. My money is now so worthless that I can show you a note for ten million marks which I cannot lodge to my credit in Berlin because the

bankers will not take account of anything less than billions—real billions, not American billions. In other words, the Germans have paid the indemnity with my money and that of their other victorious foreign creditors. So much for the method of your financial experts. The laugh is with Germany as far as I am concerned.

HENDERSON. My dear Shaw, don't say *your* financial experts, when you mean German manipulators of the currency. Dawes, Young and Co. are on quite a different footing. Since I saw you last, the situation has appreciably cleared up. Since, contrary to my own opinion, you have no faith in the American financial experts, suppose you plank down a solution of the Ruhr mess!

SHAW. Right turn and march! That is all. If the French want to apply the military "sanction," let them annex Germany. Raiding bits of it is no use. France is crying for the moon; and if she had any real friends they would tell her so. She persists in demanding

two impossible things—security and payment by Germany of what the war has cost her. Security is nonsense on the face of it. France must live dangerously beside Germany and England just as the United States must live dangerously beside Japan, and Japan beside Russia. Security means exterminating everyone else on earth. As to payment, if Germany were rich enough to pay she would be strong enough to refuse to pay. She is under no moral obligation to pay; for promises made under duress are not binding, and the notion that her "guilt" was any guiltier than that of the other players of the war game is an exploded fiction. France must be content without security, and with such plunder as she can get now, if she is unwise enough to believe that it will bring her anything but unemployment and a financial crisis. The real question is not how much Germany can afford to pay, but how much the victors can afford to give her to set her on her legs again. Germany must be treated as the wounded German prisoners

were treated—that is, carefully nursed back to health at the expense of their captors. From the European point of view plundering Germany is spiting our noses to vex our faces.

HENDERSON. A great proportion of the American people seem to entertain the view that, had the United States joined the League of Nations and taken an aggressive leadership in clearing things up in Europe after the war, the present ghastly and chaotic state of affairs would have been obviated. Perhaps the world would be better off to-day had the American people elected Cox, Democrat, pro-League of Nations, instead of Harding, Republican, anti-League of Nations—and joined the League?

SHAW. Would it have made two penn'orth of difference? The American people elected Wilson as the man who had kept his country out of the war, and was going to keep them out. That didn't make much difference, did it?

HENDERSON. No; the Germans and destiny forced Wilson's hand. It has been something of a revelation to me to discover the scorn and

hatred entertained for Wilson in both England and Germany. In England, scorn for his weakness in allowing himself to be outpointed and bamboozled by Clemençeau; in Germany. hatred for sacrificing the Fourteen Points, using them as counters to "buy" of the Allies the structure of the League of Nations. Once in conversation with me you spoke of Wilson's great mistake. Just what do you mean?

SHAW. The moment he discovered that Clemençeau and Lloyd George had not the slightest intention of making good his fourteen points, and were out simply for plunder and abuse of victory just like the North after Lincoln's death, he should have shaken the dust of Europe off his feet and withdrawn the United States from the settlement. Most unfortunately, at that moment, he caught war fever, and, to the utter consternation of his admirers, began to talk of German guilt and so forth. The "tin Jesus" whom Clemençeau ridiculed behind his back suddenly became a raving Jingo. The "sentimental delusion" of a

League of Nations, as Lloyd George treated it, was suddenly replaced by the "Hang the Kaiser" delusion on which Lloyd George won the 1918 election. The purely pathological nature of this disastrous change was proved by the breakdown in Mr. Wilson's health which followed. It was a tragic calamity. Whether history will ever forgive him for his apostasy at a moment when all the remaining hopes of the half-despairing good will of the world were centered on him I cannot tell. I do not feel bitter about it myself, because I saw too much of that brain fever that was so sudden in its attack and so complete in its transformation of reasonable men into raging lunatics.

HENDERSON. History will do more than "forgive" Wilson. After the United States has joined the League of Nations and has assisted in making it a supremely beneficent instrument in world affairs, history will canonize Wilson. But now a word about matters nearer home. In the old days, the Fabian Society refused to meddle with politics, as I recall. It

was founded in 1883 to carry on a non-sectarian, educational, and constitutional propaganda with "permeation" as its watchword. But I understand that you have changed all that. The Fabian Society to-day, I take it, is identified with, or at least allied to, the Labor party in England.

SHAW. Yes; it is a constituent of the Labor party. Thirty years ago Sidney and Beatrice Webb and I drafted a Fabian tract called *A Plan of Campaign for Labor*. The Labor party is the fulfillment of the proposals in that tract. The connection between the society and the Labor party has been constant ever since, though the society has never expelled members who, like the late Doctor Clifford, persisted in supporting the Liberal party—or any other party—at elections. But the Fabian Society has no resemblance to a political party. It is a body of "intellectuals," two thousand strong at the outside, Socialists in theory and keen on reducing their theory to constitutional practice by the devising of the requisite political

machinery and legislation. There are not many people of that sort about. The proposals of the society have often passed into law simply because Nature abhors a vacuum. Something had to be done, and nobody but Fabians had anything to propose. Under such circumstances a minority of one may be master of a situation; and the society has produced an effect out of all proportion to its very modest numbers and resources. The list of well-known people who have served their political apprenticeship in it would surprise you.

HENDERSON. You are a member of the Labor party.

SHAW. Yes.

HENDERSON. Why?

SHAW. Why not? Would you have me support the Idleness parties?

HENDERSON. The rise of the Labor party in England is being observed with keenest interest in the United States. What of the future of the Labor party?

SHAW. It will be complicated by its com-

posite and contradictory character as partly Socialist, partly trade-unionist. Trade-unionism is the capitalism of the working classes; its method is to get as much out of the employer and give him as little in return as possible, precisely as the employer's method is to get as much out of his employees and give them as little in return as he can without killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Two centuries of capitalism have corrupted the wage worker as deeply as the employer; both, like a certain American financier now deceased, have been trained to play for their own hands and damn the public. When trade-unions were little local or sectional affairs, their strikes were not severely or widely felt; but now that they enlist millions instead of thousands, and cover whole industries, the big coal strikes and transport strikes have become national calamities.

The socialist remedy is compulsory labor; but as it is compulsory labor for everybody, just like compulsory military service, no exemption being permissible on the score of "independent

incomes," the rich, who want to be free to idle, oppose it as fiercely as the poor, who want to be free to strike, and have a dread of "slavery" just because they are as effectively enslaved under so-called "free contract" as soldiers or chattel slaves. Besides, all governments, whatever party they represent, are hampered and divided by the reluctance of men to be governed at all; in short, by natural human anarchism. But in the Labor party the division is very definite: there is a socialist center, a right wing of old trade-unionists, and a left wing of young anarchists who absurdly call themselves communists, but in action are undisciplined trade-unionists. These essentially capitalistic individualistic anarchistic wings make for violent dislocations of social order. The socialist center has to hold the fort against them, and will get a good deal of prudent support as the only remaining bulwark against revolution. This situation is all that can be foreseen of the future—by which I suppose you mean the future troubles—of the Labor party.

HENDERSON. After all, Russia, not England, is the world's great training ground of socialism at present. Everybody laughed at Wells after he spent a few days in Russia and came out raving about the "beloved Lenin." Since Lenin's death, the scene has changed; and now it appears that socialism has recently made fatal concessions to capitalism in Russia. In your opinion, did Lenin set back socialism irreparably?

SHAW. No human being can set back socialism irreparably except by a war which smashes civilization; and this is never the work of the socialists. Lenin cleared the ground very effectively for experiments in socialism; and though of course he could not establish a governmental organization capable of directly covering production on the scale necessary for supporting a country like Russia, there is no evidence as yet that the capitalism he had to tolerate is uncontrolled or politically paramount in the way it is in our countries. But I do not

know what is going to happen in Russia; nor does anyone else. Neither in Russia nor elsewhere have the people been educated for democracy; and the result is that when they come into power they begin by making every mistake that experience and political science have discredited, from reckless currency inflation in pursuit of funds, to frantic setting up of crude local despotisms in pursuit of order. Considering the appalling things your American state legislatures do, and the support that the methods of Fascism and Ku-Kluxism receive among comparatively educated people, I shudder to think of what the Russians may do with their new powers before they are taught by bitter experience that rulers, like other people, have to learn their business if they are not to make a ghastly mess of it.

HENDERSON. A moment ago, you remarked that the war had settled the Irish question. Then Ireland is satisfied?

SHAW. Not at all. The people are less sat-

isfied than ever; but they have the remedies in their own hands, which is a very different matter from having them in English hands. They are clearly not satisfied with the Partition, for instance. But that will be settled by the pressure of labor on the Ulster employers and capitalists. When organized labor begins to drive them out of the Ulster Parliament they will find that what they want is a parliament of all Ireland in which the agriculture interest, always narrowly Conservative and hostile to the city proletariats, will outvote labor and socialism. Then they will swallow union with the south just as they swallowed home rule.

The political situation will be determined in the long run by the economic situation. That is good sound Marxism. But Ireland is an incalculable country because of her unrealized economic possibilities. If these were fully developed, the English might conceivably desert their comparatively uncomfortable island and reconquer Ireland by simply occupying it, just

as America is continually being conquered by all sorts of dagoes. When the late Lord Northcliffe came out with his scheme for harnessing the Shannon to Irish industry, he was only making copy out of the plans he must have heard discussed a dozen times when he was a boy in Chapelizod; for every intelligent Irishman has amused himself by pointing out such possibilities and expatiating on the great natural harbourages of the west coast. But nothing has ever come of it except a few bankrupt follies. The huge capital required found safer and more lucrative openings elsewhere.

Possibly if the Irish Free State were to attack the problem of absenteeism in its modern form by forcibly keeping Irish capital in Ireland, and insisting on Irishmen developing their own country before they develop the Argentine, something might be done. But at present it is more likely to develop the tourist traffic and make Ireland a sanatorium for the overworked Englishman and a paradise for the sentimental scenery hunter.

HENDERSON. The United States regards the experiment with great interest and deep sympathy. A new and happier era seems to be dawning for Ireland. In conclusion—after many thanks for your patience in answering so many puzzling questions—Do you hope much from the Irish Free State?

SHAW *(sceptically)*. I am too doubtful of the political capacity of the human race, my dear Henderson, to indulge in any hopes as to any section of it. But please remark this. In the old days the opponents of Irish nationalism—the Unionists, as they called themselves—used to say that what Ireland needed was twenty years of resolute government. They were quite right. What they did not see was that they were standing in the way of their own specific by imposing Dublin Castle government on Ireland. Castle government was never resolute and never could be, because it had not the moral support of the people. It had spasms of ferocity when it was more than usually terri-

fied; but spasmodic ferocity is not resolute government.

I used to point to America and ask what aristocratic British government, in Ireland or elsewhere, dare do the high-handed things that the American States did, or shoot so freely into the crowd. But now the self-governing Free State has outdone America. The English abolished the old local government of Ireland by aristocratic grand juries, and established thoroughly democratic municipal and county councils. The Free State hoofs out these democratic bodies and substitutes three automatic drumhead commissioners. That has happened not only in remote Kerry, but in the city of Dublin. What would be said if the Governor of New York State did that to Tammany? As to Coercion Acts, the worst English one on record is a perfect Magna Charter compared with the one imposed by the Free State, with its ferocious flogging clauses, and its authorization of government agents to seize any man's

property and throw on him the onus of proving that he had any right to it. The little finger of the Free State is thicker than the loins of the Castle; but the Irish stand it because it is their own government.

THE END

184 1

DATE DUE

AP 5 '67

AP 19 '67

NV 10 '67

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

PR
5365
T3
1925

33078